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“The magic power value of Sachi is... ‘1’,” the magician said.

In that moment, the expectant gazes around the room turned to shock. The father of the baby, Kurubis Gracier, widened his eyes in disbelief and trembled slightly. Meanwhile, the baby, Sachi Gracier, started crying as if sensing the unsettling atmosphere.

The magic power value represents the strength of a person’s power when using magic. It could also be described as a magician’s talent. In the country of Orchard, where this story takes place, a person’s ability as a magician is everything. The country has produced many talented magicians, and their development of magical technology has greatly improved their military and economic power. Since talent in magic is largely determined by bloodlines, families of magicians are given preferential treatment.

The Gracier family is one of those families. They have produced many top-tier magicians throughout history, contributed to the country’s development, and have been granted social privileges and status. To maintain their position, the Gracier family must develop their children’s talents and send them off as magicians. However, Sachi, born as the eldest daughter of the Gracier family, has achieved a hopeless result of a “magic power value of 1.”

“Why... this can’t be right... this is my child,” Sachi’s father, Kurubis, could not accept the result and was still in shock. He then ran to Sachi’s side and used the appraisal magic himself instead of relying on a third-party magician, called a “magic power appraiser,” which is mandatory in this appraisal ceremony. The Gracier family’s tradition of this “appraisal ceremony” is to showcase their children’s magical talent to acquaintances from other noble families.

The origins of the ceremony are varied, but now, it serves as a means to demonstrate a noble family’s dignity by displaying their child’s talent. Even though a “magic power appraiser” is necessary for the appraisal ceremony, Kurubis, as the current head of the Gracier family, has the qualifications and abilities of a national magician and decided to appraise his daughter’s magic power himself.

“This is ridiculous...”

However, even if Kurubis appraised Sachi himself, the result did not change. Sachi’s magic power value was still 1.

Chapter 1

“Luck Value 999”

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However, even if Kurubis appraised Sachi himself, the result did not change. Sachi’s magic power value was still 1.

“I have never seen such a small number of magical value. While the number of magical particles is ordinary, why is the magic power value so low?” Kurubis exclaimed.

Magical particles, a mysterious force, reside within the human body. These particles listen to the host’s voice, known as an incantation, and in response, cause supernatural phenomena to occur. This is what magic is. Therefore, the power of magic is directly proportional to the size of the magical particles. The larger the magical particles in the body, the greater the power when using magic. Additionally, having a greater number of magical particles allows for the use of more magic spells. Other qualities can also be determined by observing the color and personality of magical particles.

In Sachi’s case, although the number of magical particles was ordinary, their size was as small as grains of sand. “With such a small size, although Sachi can activate magic, it will have no power,” Kurubis stated.

Suppose someone has a magic power value of 100 and 20 magical particles. In that case, they can use a spell with 100

power 20 times. In contrast, if someone has a magic power value of 1

but has 100 magical particles, they can use a spell with a power of 1 a hundred times. However, this is no comfort. When a regular magician casts a low-level spell such as Flame Sphere, they can conjure up a fireball from their palm. In contrast, if Sachi cast it, she would only produce a weak flame akin to a matchstick. Firing it a hundred times is meaningless. Therefore, the size of the magical particles is crucial.

While the number of magical particles can be increased through training, particle size is determined at birth. Parental magical particles play a role in determining their child's particle size, with children inheriting their parents' magical particles. However, for some unknown reason, Sachi did not inherit this talent. Therefore, there is no hope of further improvement in her magical abilities.

"But in exchange, her luck value is '999'," said the magic appraiser.

"999?" Kurubis furrowed his brow at the news.

The appraiser assessed the nature of the magical elements and quantified the talent for magic as a numerical value.

According to his estimation, Sachie's magic power was only one, but her luck value was an extraordinary 999.

The average magic power of a national mage is 150, and the luck value is at most 50, so there is no mistake that this is an astonishing value.

However...

"What is the point of having a luck value of 999? It is a completely unnecessary talent for a mage!" Kurubis exclaimed.

Indeed, having a high luck value means nothing in terms of improving the effectiveness of magic. Measuring a person's good luck through the "glow" of the magical elements, the luck value is nothing but an unneeded byproduct for mages.

The only benefit would be a slightly better daily life.

Therefore, when the people around heard Sachie's luck value was 999, they couldn't help but chuckle.

This appraisal ceremony became a disgraceful event for the Gracier family, the first of its kind.

"This is a disgrace to the Gracier family...!" Kurubis muttered.

From that moment on, all expectations for Sachie were completely extinguished, and her treatment within the household became rough.

Three years had passed, and Sachie began to realize that she was being treated unfairly.

The trigger for this realization was her older brother.

Mize Gracier, unlike Sachi, had plenty of talent in magic and was showered with affection and lavish gifts from their father. He received everything he desired, including unnecessary jewels and decorations, a large room, and over a dozen dedicated maids. He also had an abundance of study materials, including paper, pens, and books.

In contrast, Sachi lived in a small, shabby room and was given only the bare minimum of necessities. She felt a significant gap between herself and her brother, especially when she saw the luxurious meals that he was given.

The Gracier household's kitchen was located right next to Sachi's room. The delicious aroma wafting from the kitchen always tempted her, and she often peeked through the door to gaze enviously at her brother's meals, consisting of shiny meat and fresh fish. She could not help but wish for even a small piece of the juicy fruit or a slice of bread.

As a result, Sachi was thin and undernourished, with lackluster silver

hair that was supposed to be shiny and lustrous.

She understood why she was being treated so unfairly, though, as she lacked any magical talent.

In this country, for the Gracier family, magic talent equated to a person's worth. Without it, Sachi felt she had no value.

However, she was grateful to be allowed to stay in the house and have meals. She also eagerly awaited the opportunity to help the maids and attend school in exchange for her work.

Therefore, Sachi was content with her current situation and deeply appreciated the peaceful days she spent in the house.

However, as time passed and shortly after Sachi turned five, her life would undergo a drastic change.

It happened when her brother was playing with a friend he had met at a gathering of prestigious families within the estate. Mize sneaked into father's room and showed his friend the jewels and antiques on display. Inadvertently, Mize dropped and broke a valuable vase that had been passed down through generations as a commemorative gift from the country.

Perhaps fearing his father's anger, Mize told a lie, using his younger and less-favored sister Sachi as a scapegoat. It was a plausible enough deception that even six boys couldn't have thought of a better one. To further enhance their credibility, Mize added a line, "Unlike me, Sachi was angered by being mistreated and deliberately shattered Father's prized vase."

Naturally, their father, Kurubis, burst into Sachi's room in a fit of rage, believing his beloved son's words without question. Kurubis not only scolded Sachi for this incident but also berated her for being a useless daughter who had accumulated his anger thus far.

Confused and taken aback, Sachi tilted her head, not understanding the accusation of a crime she had not committed.

As a result, Kurubis's anger grew even more, and he continued to lash out at Sachie.

“Don't play dumb! You broke my vase because you were unhappy with being mistreated! Even though I had pity on you and let you stay in this estate despite your incompetence, you are such an infuriating daughter!”

Finally, Kurubis's long-held anger erupted, and he disowned Sachi, banishing her from the Gracier family. He ordered the coachman to prepare a carriage and take Sachie somewhere to be abandoned in the forest.

And so, Sachie was expelled from the Gracier family. No one stood up for her, and even the brother who caused this watched her being taken away as if it were someone else's problem. In fact, he seemed deeply relieved that his own wrongdoing had not been exposed.

Eventually, the carriage carrying Sachi arrived at a deep and dark forest, and she was hurriedly dropped off.

“Please forgive me, Sachi-sama!” The coachman, unable to defy his master's orders, quickly drove the carriage away, leaving Sachi alone.

Left to fend for herself, Sachi desperately tried to understand her situation. “Where am I?” she asked herself in the deserted, dark forest. She had been left without any belongings, not even money, fire-starting tools, or a knife. All she had on her was her dirty clothes and her slender figure, with her silver hair.

Even at five years old, she understood to some degree that she had been kicked out of her home. Eventually, she would learn why she was left in that specific location and why the coachman had driven away so quickly.

Suddenly, Sachi heard a beast groaning from somewhere, as she stood frozen in place. Soon, the source of the noise emerged from the shadow of a tree. It was a gigantic monster in the form of a black wolf, with needle-like black fur, a body larger than that of a human

adult, and sharp fangs and claws.

The monstrous black wolf had come seeking prey. “A demon beast!?” Sachi exclaimed in shock.

Magical beasts. Fierce beasts that roam around the world. They are mostly carnivorous and have a particular habit of enjoying the taste of humans, as they, like humans, carry magical essence within them and can use it to exhibit various powers. By devouring humans, they can grow their own magical essence, which is said to be their ultimate delicacy.

Therefore, they are sensitive to the scent of humans who carry magical essence, and this black wolf was lured by the scent of magical essence emitted by Sachi.

“Help... me...!”

Magical beasts have a tough outer layer called “Magical Clothing,” which makes them resistant to conventional weapons such as swords and explosives, and it is difficult to inflict any damage on them. The most effective way to strip away this protective layer is to use magic that utilizes magical essence.

Thus, magical practitioners have been responsible for defeating magical beasts since ancient times, and even today, there are many practitioners who make a living as “magical beast hunters.” However, Sachi was born into a family of renowned magical practitioners but lacked the talent for magic and did not even possess a single knife, so she had no chance of winning.

“Someone... help me...!”

Sachi trembled in fear as the black wolf drooled and panted heavily.

She wanted to run away, but fear petrified her, rendering her unable to move at all. And then Sachi realized that she had not only been

kicked out of her house but also completely abandoned.

“Useless people should disappear. Useless people should die.” That’s what they wanted to say, and Sachi realized it.

The enormous black wolf leaped at Sachi’s small body.

“[The enemy is right there–Crimson Blaze–Unite and shoot through the magical essence!]”

Suddenly, a beautiful woman’s voice echoed from somewhere.

“[Burning spherical flame, Flame Sphere!]”

At the same time, a bright red fireball struck the black wolf’s flank with tremendous force, and its massive body flew off into the forest beyond.

The black wolf was defeated with just one blow, completely motionless.

Distracted by the rapidly changing situation, Sachi was momentarily stunned, and then the person who had blown the black wolf away appeared from the darkness of the forest.

She wore a black robe even darker than the wolf’s fur, and despite her slender yet feminine figure, her expressionless beauty showed through her hood that concealed her eyes.

“Are you okay, young lady?”

Sachi’s encounter with Sage Mulberry can be said to have been her first stroke of luck.

Chapter 2

“Encounter with the Sage”

“Who are you?” Sachie asked the mysterious woman who had suddenly appeared, looking extremely perplexed.

In contrast, the woman calmly and matter-of-factly introduced herself, “I am Mulberry, a mage who lives in this forest.”

Mulberry, despite her still and piercing gaze, looked surprisingly young. She had removed her black hood to reveal a youthful face with fine, fair skin. She gave off an impression of being an unsociable yet beautiful older sister with her black hair.

Sachie estimated her age to be in her twenties, or perhaps even younger. As she gazed vaguely at Mulberry’s face, the latter suddenly became restless and fidgety.

“Um, could you please not stare at me like that? I’m not used to being around people,” she said, hiding her face again with her black hood.

Sachie felt a bit put off by Mulberry’s cold demeanor, wondering if she had a problem with children. If so, things were going to be very awkward. But then, she noticed that Mulberry’s cheeks, peeking out from under the hood, had turned slightly pink.

It seemed that Mulberry was just shy. It was only natural that she wasn’t used to being around people, considering she lived in this remote forest.

Sachie secretly felt relieved, having thought that Mulberry was just an icy and unapproachable person. To avoid staring at Mulberry, she shifted her gaze slightly away.

As a result, the conversation came to a halt, and an awkward silence hung between the two for a while. Perhaps to dispel the silence, or perhaps out of concern for a child, Mulberry forced herself to start a conversation.

“If it’s alright with you, may I ask for the young lady’s name?” she asked.

Sachie suddenly remembered that she hadn’t introduced herself yet and replied, “I’m Sachie. Sachie Gracier...”

But then she stopped mid-sentence and corrected herself.

“Actually, Sachie is fine,” she corrected.

Gracier.

She wasn’t allowed to use that family name anymore, as she had been expelled from it.

“Sachie-chan... Is that alright? It’s a lovely name,” Mulberry said, but her unsociable demeanor made Sachie doubt whether she really meant it. Though her voice sounded sincere, her facial expression was hard to read.

As Sachie struggled to come up with a response, Mulberry continued, looking around the surroundings.

“Why were you alone in a place like this, Sachie-chan? Did you get separated from your family?”

It was a natural question to ask. It was strange for such a young girl to be alone in this place.

It must have seemed even more peculiar to Mulberry, who lived in

this forest.

“I was abandoned by my father. That’s why I’m here alone,” Sachie replied.

“Abandoned?” Mulberry repeated in surprise.

“He kicked me out of the house because I broke a precious vase that he valued so much,” Sachie explained in a matter-of-fact tone.

As she spoke, Mulberry’s head slowly tilted to the side in confusion.

It seemed that Mulberry was not questioning the fact that her father had abandoned her, but rather something else was bothering her.

“When you said ‘I broke it’ like that... do you mean that you did it without realizing it?” Mulberry asked.

“No, it was my older brother who broke it, but for some reason, it was blamed on me,” Sachie replied.

“That’s... terrible,” Mulberry said, her expression clouding over with sympathy, despite her usual stoicism.

“Hmm? So, you were just accused of breaking the vase and then kicked out of the house? That seems quite unreasonable, doesn’t it?”

“That’s just the way things were in that family.”

“I see.”

Given that response, Mulberry could only reply with an “I see” and couldn’t deny that families have their own ways of doing things.

“Did your mother say anything about it?”

“My mother has been bedridden for a long time, so she’s been staying in her room. But my father’s word is absolute, so I don’t think she can do anything.”

“I see.”

It seemed like Mulberry now understood that there were complicated family circumstances, so she didn’t say anything more about the family. A brief silence fell between the two.

Then, as if to dislike the quiet, Mulberry spoke up again.

“Even though you were kicked out of your house, you seem quite calm and composed. You’re really level-headed, aren’t you?”

Indeed, Sachie’s composure was not something one would expect from a young girl who had been kicked out of her house. It would be strange if she didn’t turn pale and break down in tears due to the shock and fear of being attacked by monsters.

However, Sachie calmly replied.

“I thought it might happen someday.”

“You thought so?”

“I was always treated coldly at home, so I thought it might happen eventually. I was born without any magical talent and wasn’t expected to do anything, so I was just a nuisance in that house.”

The words “nuisance” coming from the mouth of such a young girl surprised Mulberry, who widened her eyes in shock.

But for Sachie, it was a familiar word that slipped out smoothly. She had been subjected to verbal abuse from her father for a long time, so saying it herself didn’t make her sad anymore.

...Or so she thought. But the unexpected expulsion from her home had actually affected her, and Sachie found her face clouding over without realizing it.

Seeing Sachie's expression, Mulberry made a hesitant suggestion.

"If, if it's okay with you...would you like to come to my place?"

"Huh?"

"If you don't have anywhere to go, it's okay to stay at my place for a while..."

Mulberry spoke each word with effort, looking very nervous. Perhaps she wasn't used to socializing due to her shy personality. It was quite dangerous to leave a child alone in this forest, so for now, why not come to her home? That was the intention behind her suggestion.

However, there was one thing that Sachie didn't understand.

"Why?"

"Huh?"

"Why are you helping me?"

Why was Mulberry trying to help a complete stranger like her, both earlier and now?

"I should be okay with abandoning myself like this. After all, a child abandoned by a noble family should only be a troublesome seed. Especially with her shy personality, she should want to keep her distance from others as much as possible, shouldn't she?"

Above all, Sachie had only been mistreated since birth, so she only felt discomfort from kindness shown by others.

Mulberry thought for a moment before answering Sachie, who was tilting her head in confusion. “Well... I thought Sachie-chan reminded me a little of myself in the past... maybe?”

Sachie thought that Mulberry was a strange person, wondering what part of her body resembled Mulberry's. However, Sachie had nowhere else to go, so she decided to follow the woman claiming to be a female magician named Mulberry.

After all, there was no way anyone from the mansion would come to pick her up if she just stood there. If anything, the possibility of a scary magical beast coming to her with an empty stomach was higher, so Sachie chose the path with the highest chance of survival.

As Sachie trailed behind Mulberry, they eventually came upon a small house in the sunlight. “Please come in. It's not a very splendid house, though.”

Although Mulberry modestly said so, Sachie, who had lived in the mansion, thought it was a reasonably large house. The wooden house stood quietly surrounded by trees in the forest. It was a two-story house with a spacious layout. Sunlight shone through the trees, and occasionally a pleasant breeze and the chirping of birds came through the windows.

The furniture such as the table and chairs had a simple design, while the dishes on the shelf were adorned with luxurious decorations. Cleaning and organization were meticulous, and Sachie felt that the air was clean and clear. It was a far cry from the small, stuffy room she had been living in.

In addition, the tea that Mulberry made with her experienced hand was fragrant and elegant. She even made dinner with great care. Sachie felt that Mulberry was trying her best because she was unfamiliar with entertaining guests.

“Since Sachie-chan is thin, I thought it would be good for her to eat a lot,” Mulberry said.

Thick meat and hearty stew with lots of vegetables, a fresh salad, and juicy, colorful fruits. Mulberry even prepared fluffy cupcakes for dessert. Sachie's eyes welled up with tears because she had hardly eaten anything besides rock-hard bread and almost watery soup.

Above all, Mulberry took care of her with great care throughout the evening, and Sachie's broken heart was healed from the bottom of her heart. Despite her unfriendly expression, Sachie thought that Mulberry was a kind and caring older sister who was good at cooking.

There was no reason for Sachie to feel uncomfortable in such a pleasant environment.

"If you have nowhere to go, you can stay here for a while longer," Mulberry said at the end.

In the end, Sachie completely trusted Mulberry and had a carefree thought of returning home when she felt like it or going somewhere else. As she spent a peaceful life in Mulberry's home, Sachie grew up quietly. And before she knew it...

Five years had passed.

Chapter 3

“Instant Death Magic”

T/N: A very long chapter, enjoy

I turned ten years old. I’m just a regular Sachie.

It’s been five years since Mulberry took me in. I’ve been living in this forest house longer than I spent in the Gracier family mansion. I never thought I’d be taken care of for such a long time.

At first, I was planning to go to town after a month and seek help from the church or an orphanage, but the atmosphere and air quality in this house were too good to leave. Mulberry’s cooking is delicious, and she is kind.

Even when I tried to leave on my own, Mulberry always found a way to make me stay, like saying “Why don’t you wait until tomorrow?” or “Why not eat first and then think about it?” It made it difficult for me to leave.

So I ended up staying for a long time, and before I knew it, five years had passed. I’ve become so used to living with Mulberry that I can now help with household chores effortlessly.

“Phew, that’s enough.”

I wiped the sweat from my forehead as I packed as many vegetables as I could into the straw basket. Then I straightened my back and looked at the neatly arranged vegetables on the ground, taking a deep breath.

This is Mulberry’s magic vegetable garden, which is located not far from the forest house. I don’t know how it works, but it’s a facility

that almost automatically grows vegetables.

These types of magical technologies are also used inside the house. Mulberry, it seems, is quite a talented mage. She even received the prestigious title of “Sage” when she was young.

From the moment she saved me with her incredible magic when we first met, I suspected she was a skilled mage. But I never imagined she would be world-famous.

Without magic, she is just a shy and expressionless “older sister.” It’s hard to believe she’s a world-famous figure.

This magic vegetable garden is also created with highly advanced magic techniques, and anyone who sees it can feel Mulberry’s incredible skill. I used to think magic was only used for fighting, but apparently, it can be used to create useful tools by mixing magic stones and materials from magic beasts. These are called “magic tools.”

“Alright, let’s hurry and head back.”

I finished my work for the day and carried the heavy straw basket on my back as I left the magic vegetable garden.

As a ten-year-old girl, it was quite a heavy load, and I had to catch my breath as I made my way back home. I was afraid that the basket might tip over, so I focused on keeping my balance.

It was my idea to help out in the vegetable garden. I felt guilty for staying here for so long without doing anything to help, so I suggested it when I was around six years old.

At first, Mulberry told me not to worry about it, but I persisted and said, “I want to help!” until she gave in.

I didn’t want to waste my time just lazing around at home, and I wanted to contribute to Mulberry’s household in any way I could.

“Ugh, this is so heavy. I can do this...just hang in there, me.”

Anyway, now I help out with harvesting the vegetables until evening. However, Mulberry has been warning me to come back early because there are reports of a magic beast called the “Lord of the Forest” becoming more active lately.

Depending on the situation, I might even be forbidden from going out for a while. Apparently, the “Lord of the Forest” is a very dangerous magical beast that Mulberry has been battling for several years.

Even though Mulberry is a powerful mage, she hasn’t been able to defeat it after several years of fighting. I was optimistic and said, “I’ll be able to go this time for sure,” but it seems that the situation is more serious than I thought.

Anyway, Mulberry instructed me to run away immediately and inform her if the “Lord of the Forest” appears. I walked home nervously, hoping that I wouldn’t encounter the magic beast on the way.

“Welcome back.”

“I’m home.”

As I placed the basket full of vegetables in front of the entrance, Mulberry came to greet me right away.

She had the same familiar expressionless face, and her beautiful braids had grown even longer since we first met.

Her black-themed loungewear gave off a gentle older sister vibe, rather than a magician, and it looked different from her usual hooded robe.

Over time, I gradually learned more about Mulberry.

She rarely changed her expression and spoke in a monotone voice. However, she wasn't a cold person; she felt joy and sadness deep down.

In fact, she was relieved and let out a small sigh of relief now that I had returned safely.

She simply wasn't good at expressing emotions because she lacked experience in socializing.

By the way, I really love it when Mulberry turns red and gets embarrassed.

"Mulberry, is this enough?" I asked.

"Yes, it's fine. Well done, Sa-chan," she replied.

Mulberry took the basket from me and began to struggle as she carried it to the kitchen.

Although Mulberry was an amazing magician, her strength wasn't much stronger than mine.

After we managed to bring the basket filled with vegetables to the kitchen, a tantalizing aroma tickled my nose.

"Hmm! Is it stew today?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, that's right. It's almost ready, so please wash your hands and come," Mulberry said.

"Okay!"

I rushed to the sink, letting out the liveliest voice I had all day.

Mulberry's cooking was the most delicious in the world.

Well, I couldn't remember eating anything else besides that hard bread and thin soup.

So for me, Mulberry's cooking was the taste of a mother.

After washing my hands, I sat down at the table, and the dishes were quickly placed in front of me.

Then Mulberry and I said "Itadakimasu" together.

I enjoyed the delicious food as usual, and talked to Mulberry about what happened today, ending a pleasant dinner time.

"Thank you for the meal. It was delicious today too. I give it a score of 150 out of 100!" I said.

"I still don't understand why you are giving me more than a 100 points, but I'm glad it was to your liking," Mulberry replied.

After dinner, we spent a relaxing time drinking tea.

In the middle of that, I suddenly thought of something and asked Mulberry, who was sitting across from me.

"Hey, Mulberry," I said.

"Yes?" Mulberry replied.

"Can you teach me how to use magic?"

"Eh..." Mulberry widened her eyes in surprise at my sudden request.

"Why do you want to learn now?" she asked.

“I’ve always been impressed by your magic, Mulberry. I think it’s so cool how you can knock down magical beasts with a bang. Since the first time you saved me, I’ve always thought that your fighting style is amazing and wonderful.”

I wanted to use magic like Mulberry, to fight for someone else’s sake. It could be useful in various aspects of life, but more than anything else, I’ve always admired the cool Mulberry who saved me at that time.

“That’s why I thought if you teach me how to use magic, I can become a cool magician like you. I know I don’t have talent, but I still want to try,” I said with a self-deprecating smile.

“Sa-chan,” Mulberry lowered her voice sympathetically, although her expression remained stoic.

“I thought you disliked magic because you didn’t have many good memories related to it.”

“Well, that’s not really important now. Although I did have some unpleasant experiences related to magic in my home, I don’t remember them very well because they were from my childhood,” I explained.

I barely remember anything from that time.

I didn’t dislike magic just because of those experiences.

“Well, I do regret not having any talent for magic. But in the end, it was good because I got to meet you, Mulberry,” I added.

Mulberry looked stunned at my casual comment, and then she turned her face away and let out a secret smile, looking happy.

After a while, Mulberry turned back to me, her expressionless face back in place, and nodded her head.

“I understand. Although I am also still an inexperienced person, I would like to teach you about magic to the best of my ability,” said Mulberry.

“Yes, please! Thank you, Master!” replied Sachie.

Mulberry hesitated and said, “Well, maybe you shouldn’t call me ‘Master’ just yet.”

Then she began to teach Sachie about magic.

“Now, can you show me your magical essence?” Mulberry asked.

“Oh, you mean the magic power appraisal? Or was it the magical essence appraisal?” Sachie replied.

“Either term is correct. Basically, it’s a way to examine the magical essence sleeping within you, and to determine your magical aptitude and special abilities,” Mulberry explained.

Since each person’s magical essence is unique in terms of size, quantity, color, personality, and brilliance, their aptitudes for magic also vary accordingly. By examining their magical essence, it becomes clear which type of magic they should focus on and which talents they should develop.

So Sachie offered her arms as if to say, “Please examine them thoroughly.”

However, Mulberry looked puzzled and furrowed her eyebrows. “Well, magical essence appraisal usually requires physical contact with the subject, so it’s better to touch their hand or something,” she said.

“Oh, I see,” Sachie said, and offered her right hand.

Mulberry gently wrapped Sachie’s hand with her smooth and delicate hands, and soon she made a difficult expression.

“What’s wrong? Do I have no talent?” Sachie asked.

“Well, actually...” Mulberry hesitated.

Although the magical essence appraisal should have already been completed, Mulberry seemed hesitant to say anything. Sachie didn’t really care if she had no talent, but it seemed like Mulberry was trying to spare her feelings.

However, it turned out that Mulberry was worried about something else.

“Indeed, it seems that you don’t have much magical aptitude based on your magical essence. Your magical essence is quite small, so you have very little magical power. The color is also transparent, and you don’t seem to have any special abilities. But...” Mulberry paused.

“But what?” Sachie asked.

“Well, your magical essence’s brilliance... your luck value is extraordinarily high,” Mulberry said, looking puzzled.

“Is it really that amazing?” Sachie asked.

“It’s not just amazing, it’s scary how brilliant it is. If I were to put a number on it, it would be at the limit of 999,”

Mulberry replied.

“Luck value of 999... But luck value is meaningless for a magician, right?” Sachie remembered hearing that before.

It was said that luck value was more useful for business people than for magicians. People with strong magical essence tend to have good things happen to them in their daily lives and not face financial difficulties.

But as for Sachie, she felt like she was currently at the peak of happiness, so the credibility of that theory might be relatively high.

In any case, it was clear that luck value had no direct impact on the power of magic.

“Indeed, in modern magic theory, luck value is considered a meaningless number. However, in the past, there was research into the possibility that luck value could have some impact, and some magic spells that varied in effect according to luck value were discovered,” Mulberry explained.

Her tone was more animated than usual, and it seemed like she really enjoyed talking about magic.

Sachie was interested in magic, so she leaned forward on the table, eager to hear more of Mulberry’s lecture.

“As we know, the power of magic usually varies according to the magical essence’s magic power value,” Mulberry continued.

“Right. So people with higher magic power value are more talented as magicians, right?” Sachie asked.

“Of course, that’s true. However, there are also spells whose effects vary depending on luck value, and through research, we have discovered some of them,” Mulberry said.

“Really? I’ve never heard of that,” Sachie said.

She had never heard of spells whose effects varied according to luck’s value. Even though she lived in the Gracier family, which was famous for producing top-class magicians, she thought she knew a fair amount about magic.

“There are only a limited number of such spells, and they were only briefly discussed a long time ago, so I think most magicians don’t know about them. Even if they did, it wouldn’t be very useful

information. I just happen to like researching magic and reading old texts,” Mulberry explained.

“I don’t think they teach this at magic academies, do they?” she added.

Spells whose effects varied according to luck value. It seemed like they had little practical use, but Sachie didn’t think they were completely useless.

Maybe they would be like gambling, where they occasionally produced a positive effect. It sounded interesting to her.

However, the reality that Mulberry presented soon changed Sachie’s thinking.

“There are some magic spells that depend on luck, but all of them are said to have a success rate of ‘one in ten thousand’ at best,” the speaker said.

“O-One in ten thousand!?” I exclaimed, feeling speechless at the overwhelmingly hopeless probability.

While it sounded like a fun gamble, relying on magic spells with such a low probability of success as one in ten thousand would be worthless. If you attempted ten thousand times in a battle, you would become the prey of magical beasts in no time.

“There are also ‘magic spells that do nothing’ that require millions of attempts before anything happens. So, I think it’s safe to say that they have no practical use,” Mulberry added.

“...Isn’t that just a ‘magic spell that does nothing,’ rather than one that depends on luck?” I asked, wondering who would even attempt to use it millions of times.

“Because they rely on a probability-based activation, their practical use in combat is almost non-existent. No magician would leave

everything to chance and fight magical beasts like that,” she replied.

“So, they’re not taught in magic academies, and they’re forgotten by magicians,” I summarized.

“That’s right. However, through the research of diligent magicians of the past, the mysteries of these spells were gradually unraveled. As a result, it was discovered that individuals with a stronger magical aura had a slightly higher success rate than the average when using such spells, depending on their luck,” she explained.

That’s what Marberry called a ‘probability magic’ that relies on luck. A special type of magic where the effect is determined not by the amount of magical power but by luck.

“So, if Sachie has an incredibly high luck value of 999 and her magical aura shines as bright as the sun, she might be able to turn such spells into something practical, don’t you think?” Mulberry suggested.

“...,” I remained silent.

It was true that relying on probability-based magic spells that depend on luck might be more realistic than using ordinary magic spells, given that my magical power was only one. If I relied on probability-based magic spells, which depend on luck, there might be some hope for me. But, what difference would it make with a luck value of 999? Would the probability change from one in ten thousand to around one in five thousand? Even then, it would be utterly useless.

“【The dice have been cast – Guided by the gods – Blame your destiny, not others if you hate】”

Suddenly, Marberry began chanting what seemed to be a spell and turned her right hand towards me.

“【The mischief of fate, Fortuna】”

Instantly, a yellow light emitted from her palm, and my entire body was briefly bathed in yellow light. Other than that, nothing else happened.

“What was that just now?” I asked.

“It’s a ‘restraint spell’ that can immobilize the target with a probability of about one in ten thousand. If successful, it can render the opponent unable to move, regardless of their magic power, making it quite powerful ‘if’ it works,” Marberry explained.

“...’if’ it works,” I repeated.

I couldn’t help but let out a dry laugh.

So, it failed, as expected. With a success rate of about one in ten thousand, it was no surprise.

Marberry probably tried it on me with the assumption that it might fail.

I glanced down at my right hand and murmured, “Can I do it too?”

“Although your magical aura is small, the amount itself is normal, so it’s possible for you to use magic. Try chanting like I did earlier,” Marberry encouraged.

“Um, okay. I got it.”

Let’s see...I remembered the chant.

“【The dice have been cast – Guided by the gods – Blame your destiny, not others if you hate】”

I recited the same chant Marberry had spoken earlier and extended

my right hand forward.

“【The mischief of fate, Fortuna】”

And just like Marberry did earlier, my right hand glowed brightly.

I did it! I could use magic too!

Well, a magic spell that only works once in every ten thousand tries was nothing more than just a fancy light show.

As I was thinking that, suddenly...

“Ugh...”

Marberry, who was sitting in front of me, suddenly collapsed onto the table with a thud.

It was so sudden that I was left stunned.

Upon closer inspection, Marberry was convulsing, gasping for breath.

“Um, excuse me, Mulberry-san?”

“Huh...?!”

Despite calling out, there was no response. Mulberry remained prostrate on the table, as if under some kind of spell.

Trying to understand what was going on, I watched as Mulberry suddenly jolted upright, eyes wide with shock.

“Pant...pant...pant...!”

Afraid of what I was thinking, I timidly asked Mulberry:

“Umm... Was... was some kind of magic just cast on you?”

“Y-Yes. I was bound by a spell.”

As I had suspected, Mulberry nodded.

It was the ‘Binding Magic’ called **【Fate’s Trick, Fortuna】**, which could immobilize the target if successful.

I wondered if the first use of this spell had worked, or if my luck was so high that I managed to succeed on the first try.

“Wasn’t it a one in ten thousand chance? Maybe my luck is high and that’s why it worked on the first try?”

“That... that’s a possibility, but it’s still strange to succeed on the first attempt. It could be that you just happened to draw the one in ten thousand chance... “

So, the conversation led to “let’s try it again.”

I raised my right hand again and began to chant the spell I had just learned.

“**【The dice have been cast... Guided by the gods... If you resent something, resent your own destiny】 ... 【Fate’s Trick, Fortuna】 !**”

And then...

“Ugh...!”

Mulberry once again fell forward onto the table, just like before. It was exactly the same scene as before.

Seeing her fall in the exact same way, I furrowed my brow and asked, “Mulberry-san, you’re not acting, are you?”

“Ugh... groan...!”

“If you’re acting, please stop now. If you don’t stop, I’ll play a trick on you.”

I began to suspect that Mulberry was pretending to be under the spell because it was too strange for the spell to work twice in a row.

So I approached her from behind and inserted my hand into her side to try and confirm if she was acting or not.

“Hey, hey, stop it!”

“Oh, hehe... sto...p...!”

I thought Mulberry was acting, but she didn’t resist at all. Wow, even Mulberry couldn’t move and was writhing in agony. I was unilaterally tormenting a master magician. I felt like I had become an amazing magician myself.

After a while, Mulberry jumped up again, panting heavily and with a bright red face.

“Ha...ha...ha...!”

Sweating profusely, I asked her if she was really not acting.

“I’m not acting! It happened the same way earlier too, and you tickled me while I couldn’t move...”

“I’m sorry, I’m sorry.”

Mulberry was unusually shaken. I didn't think the magic would work every time on Mulberry.

I just tickled her to make sure. I heard that people with high magical power also have high resistance to magic, so I thought my magic would be meaningless against Mulberry.

Apparently, both magicians and magical beasts unconsciously emit the power of magical elements outside their bodies and wear it like armor to protect themselves from harm. This protective film generated by the magical elements is also called the "Magical Armor".

This is why blades and explosives have little effect on skilled magicians and dangerous magical beasts, and magical attacks are the most effective.

However, I've heard that if there is a difference in magical power, even small spells can be easily deflected. But as Mulberry explained, this spell seems to be able to bind the target regardless of the difference in magical power, as long as it succeeds.

Come to think of it...

"Why does this magic work multiple times? Even if success rate changes depending on luck, it shouldn't work every time, should it?"

"I thought it should have been like that, but maybe..." murmured Mulberry to herself.

She then began to hold her head in thought for a while, trying to comprehend what had just happened. It was understandable that a research-minded magician like Mulberry would be troubled if a luck-based magic kept succeeding repeatedly.

Not wanting to interrupt Mulberry's thoughts, I simply watched her silently.

Suddenly, another voice could be heard from outside, interrupting Mulberry's thinking.

"Gwoooooo!!!"

"Wha-!?" Both of us were startled by the sudden noise.

We quickly ran to the entrance to peer outside and saw a massive silver-haired boar with two large tusks, thick limbs like logs, and sharp red eyes glaring at us. It was so terrifying that I felt like crying even at my age.

Judging by Mulberry's reaction, it seemed that this was the infamous "Forest Lord." It was rampaging through the nearby magic garden, destroying everything in its path while emitting a horrible scream.

Seeing this shocking scene, I trembled with fear and looked up at Mulberry.

"What should we do, Mulberry...?"

"Don't worry. Sa-chan, please go inside and stay quiet. The time has finally come to settle the long-standing feud. I will definitely defeat the Forest Lord," she said, giving me hope that she would take care of it.

However, she didn't continue with her promise to defeat the Forest Lord, leaving me puzzled.

As I stared at Mulberry in confusion, she suddenly grabbed a piece of paper and a pen from the shelf next to the entrance and quickly wrote something on it. She then handed the paper to me.

"Sa-chan, before you go inside, could you try chanting this?" she asked.

"What? At a time like this...?"

From what I could tell, it was a magical incantation. I didn't know what kind of magic it was, but it seemed that Mulberry wanted me to use it against the magical beast.

I wondered why she chose this moment to give me this spell and what kind of magic it was, but since it wasn't too long, I decided to try it out and use the spell to escape inside the house.

“Atto... [Life or death – Reaper's scythe – Cut the enemy's neck in one go.]”

In that moment, I suddenly realized my hidden potential as a magician.

“[Devil's message – Death Notice.]”

Suddenly, a menacing jet-black light was emitted from my right hand towards the Forest Lord. Simultaneously, the Forest Lord, which was only a short distance away, was enveloped in a black mist.

For some reason, the Forest Lord, which was dancing wildly just a moment ago, suddenly stopped moving and froze, as if time had stopped. The area was filled with complete silence.

“Guh... Gaahhh...!”

After a short while, the Forest Lord let out a groan of agony. It slowly collapsed onto the ground as if it were a toppled piece of furniture, without any further movement.

It didn't get up, nor did it even breathe. It had become a part of the forest scenery and was completely motionless.

In other words, from any angle, it was clear that the Forest Lord was dead.

“No... way...”

I trembled as I looked down at my outstretched right hand. Then, I slowly looked up at Mulberry. She was gaping at the fallen Forest Lord, which had taken her years to defeat, in disbelief.

The magical beast that Mulberry had been unable to defeat for years had suddenly died in just one moment.

Could it be...

“I-Is the magic I used just now...?”

“W-Well, with a probability of one in a million, it’s the 【Devil’s Omen Death Notice】 , a ‘death magic’ that can definitely end the target’s life.”

“...”

A death magic. If successful, it can kill the target without fail, truly a devilish magic. It doesn’t matter how ferocious the magical beast is, or how strong their magical armor is, it can be taken down in a single blow. Of course, the success rate is very low, with only one in a million chances.

And yet, I have managed to succeed in this extremely low probability magic with just one attempt.

“I-It was just a whim to try out the death magic, I never thought it would actually work...”

I thought so before, but it’s true. I have the ability to succeed in magic that has a very low probability of working.

Whether it’s a restraining magic that only works one out of ten thousand times, or a death magic that only works once in a million times, I can definitely succeed in it. All thanks to my luck stat of 999.

“Y-You’re amazing, Sa-chan... Your talent might even change the common knowledge of magic.”

With those words from the legendary mage Mulberry, who was once called the “Sage”, I finally gained confidence.

I may have been expelled from a prestigious family of mages due to my low magic power stat of 1, but with my luck stat of 999...

Perhaps I have the talent of a mage after all.

Chapter 4

“The World’s Strongest Magician”

I have the potential to become a magician.

After that, I tried some luck-dependent magic a few more times, and I was able to succeed every time with 100%

accuracy.

Even magic that occasionally restrains the opponent becomes a surefire restraint when I use it. And the magic that can sometimes lead to death for the opponent transforms into a lethal magic when I use it.

This is undoubtedly the talent that can become a magician.

I never thought that luck had such power, but it’s all thanks to the incredible value of “999”, so others may not feel the same benefit.

Anyway, this has given me a good chance to become a magician.

And under the guidance of Mulberry, I began to walk the path of a magician, learning the basics of magic and selecting the magic that suited me.

Time passed, and I turned fifteen.

“Sachie, I have something to tell you.”

“Hmm? What is it?”

As usual, after finishing the magic lesson and preparing to cook dinner, Mulberry suddenly stopped me and urged me to sit down again.

Curiously, when I sat down and tilted my head, Mulberry made an unexpected proposal after clearing her throat.

“Why don’t you try enrolling in a magic school?”

“Huh?”

Magic school. It refers to an educational facility aimed at learning magic in general.

However, in the magic country of Orchard, when you hear “magic school,” everyone would associate it with the “Royal Harvest Magic Academy.”

It is the world’s largest facility for training magicians, established in the capital city of Blossom. All of its entrance exams, advancement exams, and graduation exams are said to be extremely difficult, and only those with extraordinary talent are allowed to enter.

And magical talent is completely determined by bloodline.

In ancient times, it was said to be a secret technique allowed only for nobles. Even now, there are very few opportunities for commoners to touch magic.

Therefore, most of the people attending magic schools were born from noble families.

In other words, it can be said to be a “noble school.”

Enrolling there means...

“So, you mean instead of learning from you, I should go to the school and study magic?”

“Yes, that’s right. If you go to a magic school, you can receive cutting-edge magic education, and you can freely access literature and books. I thought that enrolling in a magic school would be the best way to deepen your knowledge of magic in the future. Above all, I think it’s better to learn some general knowledge.”

Mulberry still speaks emotionlessly and calmly.

Studying at a magic school, huh?

Certainly, I could learn cutting-edge magic technology there, and also acquire general knowledge.

But...

“I think learning from you alone is sufficient, Mulberry-san.”

“I can only teach you the basics of magic. I thought it would be best for you to learn common sense by going to school.

Also, it doesn’t seem good for your health to stay in this damp forest forever.”

Well, I do want to deepen my knowledge of magic, and I also want to learn human-like common sense. I’ve been either persecuted in a closed family or lived only in this forest house, so I’m not familiar with general knowledge.

Honestly, I’m not uninterested in attending school.

But...

“I don’t know if I can make friends...”

“Is that your concern?”

Well, friends are pretty important.

They are the greatest presence that enriches student life, and that also has a direct impact on academic motivation.

I think I read that in a book Mulberry-san has.

And I’ve never really had anyone who I could call a friend, and I haven’t even had a proper conversation with anyone else since I haven’t left this forest.

It’s only natural to be worried about whether I can make friends or not.

“If Mulberry-san could enroll with me and become my classmate, I would gladly go to school.”

“Don’t say something impossible. Even if we enrolled together, I can see a future where you will make more friends and gradually grow distant from me.”

“Why are you so self-deprecating?”

Mulberry-san began to say something ominous while still speaking in a calm tone.

Why does she think so lowly of herself? There is no way we would become distant.

Even if I make more friends, I intend to be with Mulberry-san all the time.

Even if Mulberry-san becomes a loner girl who doesn’t talk to anyone

and just reads books in the corner of the classroom, I will actively go talk to her.

But it is easy to imagine Mulberry-san becoming a loner at the school.

“Well, I’ve already graduated from the Royal Harvest Magic Academy, so I can’t enroll with Sachie-chan. It’s not just because of my age either.”

“Oh, I see. They say you have to be fifteen to enter the magic academy. It’s tough for someone in their forties like you.”

“Um, actually, I’m still in my late twenties.”

With a joke thrown in, Mulberry-san stared at me with a blank expression.

Basically, the education system in the magic country of Orchard involves receiving basic education from home tutors at home until the age of six, then entering primary school. From there, they moved on to middle school at the age of twelve, and then to high school at fifteen. It seems that they start learning magic in earnest from middle school, but in prestigious wizarding families, they are given a genius education in magic from a young age.

The Royal Harvest Magic Academy is a three-year high school education facility, and applicants must be fifteen years old at the time of enrollment. There is also a transfer system that allows for admission from the age of sixteen or seventeen, but the transfer exam is said to be as difficult as a monster, and even if you pass, the chances of reaching graduation are nil.

The reason for this is that you have to build up your grades from scratch to advance or graduate, so even a small delay can be fatal.

Anyway, Mulberry-san, who had long passed the age of transfer eligibility, unfortunately cannot enroll.

“Because of those circumstances, I can’t go with you. Please go to the magic academy by yourself, Sachie-chan. Besides, I’m not supposed to be...”

Suddenly, Mulberry’s face darkened, and she muttered in a gloomy voice.

“I’m not even supposed to leave this forest.”

“Huh?”

Seeing Mulberry-san looking a little depressed, I furrowed my brow deeply.

Not allowed to leave the forest? What does that mean exactly?

I thought it had a somewhat ominous sound to it.

“You asked me one day why I live in this forest, right?”

“Yeah. I was curious about why you stay here, so far away from the town, in such a dangerous place where magical beasts frequently appear.”

No one would ever think of retiring in such a forest.

Still, she continues to live in this forest, as if avoiding people’s gaze.

I was curious about this and asked her when I was about six or seven years old, “Why do you live in the forest?”

“At that time, I dodged the question by saying that I liked nature, but the truth is...I’m actually trapped in this forest,”

Mulberry said.

“Trapped...in the forest?”

The atmosphere became even more tense.

Naturally, my face also became stiff.

Come to think of it, I knew about Mulberry, but I didn't really know much about her.

She's good at cooking and is kind, but she's shy and bad at showing her emotions, and she's also an amazing wizard.

“The official name of this forest is the ‘Forest of Sinners.’ As the name suggests, it's become a place where sinful people are thrown. To put it simply, it's like a prison,” Mulberry explained.

“A prison? I was thrown into such a forest? What kind of father throws their own daughter into a forest like a prison?”

Wait, is Mulberry-san a criminal?”

“I-I'd like you to refrain from using that word.”

Mulberry narrowed her eyes and looked at me.

It seems like the way I worded it was wrong.

“I'm not exactly a criminal. If you commit a crime, you'll be sent to prison, but in my case, it's not like that. I was trapped in this ‘Forest of Sinners’ because I was seen as a ‘dangerous person’ who couldn't even be left in the town by the country.”

“Dangerous...person?”

“Ah, well, this might be a good opportunity to talk about it...”

Mulberry said with an apologetic expression.

“I can hear the voice of magical essence.”

“The voice of magical essence?”

“The magical essence that resides in my body can speak, and I have a special constitution that allows me to hear that voice. According to what I’ve heard, I’m an exceptional talent that comes around once every five hundred years.”

Mulberry seemed to be confident, puffing out her chest a little.

Is there really someone who can hear the voice of magical essence? I can’t hear it at all.

I wonder how the voice reaches her. I kind of want to hear it a little bit.

But what does that have to do with her being seen as a dangerous person by the country?

Where exactly is the danger coming from?

“The voice of magic essence is quite unique, and usually it just spills meaningless words like a soliloquy. But sometimes it tells very important things,” said Mulberry.

“Important things? What does magic essence teach you?”

“The ‘incantations’ of magic,” Mulberry replied.

Hmm?

I didn’t quite understand Mulberry’s words.

Magic Essence teaches the incantations of magic?

“Well, magic is said to have been created by ancient people who heard the voice of magic essence. Nowadays, various incantations are passed down in literature and such, but originally, like me, old sorcerers who could hear the voice of magic essence created magic and passed it down,” Mulberry explained.

“I had no idea.”

So, ancient sorcerers who could hear the voice of magic essence invented magic by creating incantations one by one.

Well, in retrospect, it’s definitely a question of where magic came from. If it’s true that it was taught by the magic essence within us, then it makes sense in many ways.

Then Mulberry must be a precious existence that could create new magic. But wait, why is she trapped in this forest?

“In the magic country of Orchard, people used to call those who could hear the voice of magic essence ‘magicians’ and revered them like gods. But one day, magicians began to be regarded as evil beings who attract disaster,” Mulberry continued.

“Disaster?”

“Natural disasters frequently occurred in the towns where magicians lived, and abnormal numbers of magical beasts attacked, among other bad events. It is said that there were too many bad things to count,” Mulberry said.

So, earthquakes, typhoons, abnormal weather, and everything else were blamed on magicians. Well, if magical beasts were attacking at an abnormal frequency, it’s understandable that people would start to suspect something.

“But is the magician really the cause of all this? Is there any

evidence?" I asked.

"They don't know anything for sure. But if there is a 'special existence' that appears every few hundred years in the midst of all the damage, it is a natural progression for skeptical eyes to focus on that person," Mulberry said.

If you are in a state of panic due to experiencing various disasters, it's natural to become even more suspicious. And so, the notion that magicians were evil became stronger.

Magicians are the bad guys who bring misfortune.

"But of course, that's not the only reason why I was trapped in this forest. At first, I was just slightly regarded with suspicion, but I was able to live a normal life," Mulberry said.

"Well, you became a national sorcerer and were called a 'sage.' So, why are you now imprisoned in this remote forest?"

"Well, um...it really happened, a major disaster," Mulberry replied.

"What...?" I said, surprised.

"Legendary-class magical beasts, which are rarely seen, flooded into the capital city of Blossom in groups of dozens. The cause is unknown. And because it's unknown, suspicion was cast on me, a sorcerer who lived in the capital, and doubts began to be directed at me," Mulberry explained.

Legendary-class magical beasts, groups of dozens...

Just imagining that scene made my spine freeze.

Why did something like that happen?

Since the cause is unknown, suspicion was cast on Mulberry, the sorcerer.

“They said that as a sorcerer, I drew the magical beasts towards us and caused the disaster. Before I knew it, I was treated as a dangerous person. Eventually, I wasn’t even allowed to come and go from town, and I was prohibited from leaving this forest,” Mulberry said.

“Just because of your constitution? Is that really possible?”

It’s a terrible story.

Even though there’s no solid evidence.

Without any reason, Mulberry was simply made to be the cause of the disaster and locked up in this dangerous forest.

“Since ancient times, sorcerers who caused disasters were confined to the forest of sinners like this. If they are confined here, there will be no damage to the town, and there is some mysterious power in this forest that suppresses evil spirits,” Mulberry said.

“That’s ridiculous. Don’t believe such a story. You should secretly return to town. This forest is dangerous because there are so many magical beasts, and living in town is much more enjoyable,” I suggested.

“I would love to do that, but I have already been recognized as a dangerous person by the country. As proof of that, the national sorcerers have put a special barrier magic on this forest of sinners, and if I step outside even one step, it seems that it will be reported to the capital,” Mulberry explained.

A special magic barrier? I didn’t even notice something like that was set up. I often go to the edge of the forest to pick nuts, but maybe it’s something invisible. If it’s invisible, does that mean you can’t even touch it? So, it seems difficult to break it too. In the first place, there’s

no way to easily break a barrier created by a group of national magicians.

Probably, it's an invisible curtain-like barrier that only reacts to Mulberry's magical essence. And since its effect is only to detect entry and exit, the magical efficiency is probably quite good. With this, the barrier will be maintained indefinitely without relying on human intervention. Moreover, even if it's just a magic that detects entry and exit, its threat to Mulberry, who is timid, is immense. It's like saying if your escape is discovered, the country will unite to capture you. It's a pretty sinister magic barrier. There's no other way for Mulberry to leave here safely and with peace of mind except to get permission from the country.

"So I can't go to the town. My face is probably well-known, and I don't want to be beheaded. And also... If I were to cause another terrible disaster in the town and inconvenience everyone again..." Mulberry said, creating a shadow over her face with a guilty expression.

Watching Mulberry with a sorry expression, I secretly felt a pang in my chest. The causal relationship between magicians and natural disasters is not clear. However, due to the folklore that something bad happened, Mulberry herself has been told to take the blame. Perhaps she really brought disaster upon herself. Above all, Mulberry is a person with a timid heart, despite her dignified atmosphere, so it's no wonder that she feels anxious and self-deprecating about such things.

At that moment, I suddenly remembered when I first met Mulberry. "Is it because of that reason you said that I resemble your past self?" I asked Mulberry.

"Huh?" Mulberry replied.

I was referring to when Mulberry picked me up. When I asked her why she helped me, she answered, "I thought you resembled my past self." I couldn't ask her anything at that time, but now that I know about Mulberry's past, I feel like I understand it a little.

“I was abandoned in the forest by my family and left to die. And Mulberry-san was exiled from the town and confined to the forest. We do resemble each other a little bit. That’s why Mulberry-san helped me, right?” I asked Mulberry. She looked up at the ceiling, reminiscing about that time.

“Yes...that’s right. At that time, I saw myself in you and couldn’t help but want to help you. And also...well, umm...”

Mulberry suddenly cut off her words.

Then, surprisingly rare for her usually expressionless face, Mulberry briefly showed a sad expression that looked like she was about to burst into tears.

“I was so lonely being alone in this forest,” she said.

Lonely. It’s only now that I realize it’s natural for her to feel that way. Living alone in such a damp and dangerous forest, it’s bound to affect her mentally. It’s already difficult enough just to survive, but she’s also prohibited from leaving the forest and treated as a nuisance by the townspeople. Even if she wanted to return to town, she couldn’t.. She has to spend her entire life in this dim forest. All because of a special magical condition.

Realizing Mulberry’s situation once again, I secretly bit my lip and made a decision.

“I’ll free you from this forest, Mulberry-san!”

“Huh?” Mulberry replied.

“I’ll attend the magic school and become a national magician, and convince them to let you leave the forest,” I explained.

I thought it was a great idea, the best solution.

But Mulberry’s reaction was quite slow.

“C-Can you really do that?” she asked.

“I don’t think it will have much effect if I appeal to the country as an ordinary person. But if I can convince them that you’re not a dangerous person as a national magician, they will surely understand,” I replied.

After all, national magicians are recognized by the country as official magicians. I think it would be much more effective than appealing to an ordinary person.

But Mulberry looked puzzled at my suggestion.

“Will it really work? While the influence of national magicians is undoubtedly significant, it’s still doubtful whether you can move the will of the country,” she said.

“Well, maybe not?” I replied uncertainly.

I thought being a national magician would be enough, but it seems like it’s still not enough. Well, it’s probably harder than I imagined to prove that someone who is seen as a dangerous person by the country is truly safe. It seems like it’s impossible with just one national magician. Oh, well then...

“If being just a national magician isn’t enough, then I’ll become the ‘world’s strongest’ national magician,” I said.

“The world’s strongest?”

“If I become the strongest magician in the world, no one will be able to ignore me anymore. They will surely think that what the strongest magician says must be right, and I’ll be able to correct the country’s ideas. Moreover, this is the magic country of Orchard. It’s not an exaggeration to say that as a magician, power is everything. Yeah, that’s a great plan.”

To become a magician strong enough to overpower everything with my own abilities, and to gain the weight and persuasive power of the world's strongest magician's words. Perhaps I could correct the country's ideas. Above all, this was the magic country of Orchard, where the power of a magician was everything. 'Yeah, that's a good idea.'

"So, I'll go to the Magic Academy. I'll surely become the world's strongest national magician and help Mulberry-san," I declared.

"I didn't suggest it for that reason," Mulberry said, shrugging her shoulders in exasperation.

I had made a decision and am burning with determination, but Mulberry looked at me with a mixture of amusement and disappointment. Had I spoken too rashly about my dream, which was too convenient to be true?

However, Mulberry's expression suddenly changed from exasperation to a faint smile that she rarely showed. "But, well... going shopping in town with Sachie-chan and having fun visiting various places sounds really enjoyable," she said.

"See, see! Just wait and see, and keep your expectations high," Sachie replied confidently.

"...Sachie-chan is as self-assured as ever. But, I do think you're capable of doing it," Mulberry said.

Of course. After all, I am the luckiest girl with a luck value of 999, who is even loved by the gods.

Above all, I wanted to repay Mulberry for everything she had done to raise me. I would do my best to help Mulberry out of the Forest of sinners.

And so, Sachie decided to aim to become the "world's strongest"

national magician to help Mulberry.

Oh, not just a national magician.

Chapter 5

The Lucky Girl's Departure

From the day I decided to attend the Magic Academy, I steadily prepared for it.

The entrance exam for the Royal Harvest Magic Academy was apparently three months away, and the application period was currently open.

During that time, I had to go to the capital city of Blossom to apply and prepare for the exam.

So I focused even more on studying magic and began training in practical combat scenarios.

According to Mulberry, the entrance exam for the magic academy included not only a written exam but also a practical exam that involved combat with magical beasts.

So if I got used to practical combat now, the exam would be somewhat easier.

Moreover, it seemed that the practical exam was more important.

While magicians were responsible for developing magical techniques, they originally referred to people whose occupation was hunting magical beasts.

Well, just studying in a classroom would get boring, so it's better to learn magic by moving your body.

“In anticipation of the entrance exam, I’m going to ask Sachie to defeat the small magical beasts that appear in the forest. I usually do it, but from today on, I’ll leave it to you, Sachie.”

“Yeah, leave it to me!”

That’s how I continued to prepare for the exam, balancing helping Mulberry-san and training in combat with magical beasts.

I never thought I would be allowed to help with hunting magical beasts, but it seems that I was recognized for my ability to defeat the forest lord with a single blow.

I could wander around the forest alone safely.

From then on, I repeated the process of learning magic from Mulberry-san at home and using it in combat with magical beasts.

And about a month remained until the deadline for applying to the magic academy.

Finally, the day of departure arrived.

“Are you sure you didn’t forget anything?”

“Yeah, I’m pretty sure.”

I confirmed the contents of the bag I was carrying and nodded back at Mulberry-san, wearing the matching robes she had given me.

I also checked my pocket to make sure that the thick wallet she gave me was inside.

Apparently, she had accumulated a considerable amount of money during her time as a national magician.

But since she was trapped in this forest, there was no use for it.

Finally, the opportunity to use it had arrived, and she enthusiastically took out her savings.

I think I won't have any trouble living for a while with this.

I received everything from her, and I owe her a great deal of gratitude.

To repay her, I have to give it my all in the entrance exam.

“Well then, I'm off.”

“Okay, take care.”

I adjusted the backpack on my back and was about to turn my back on the house where I had spent ten years.

But just before that, I caught a glimpse of Mulberry-san's expression in the corner of my vision.

As usual, her emotions were hard to discern from her expressionless face.

But then, she seemed to be frowning as if she was feeling down.

“What's wrong, Mulberry-san?”

“Oh, it's nothing. It's just that, even though I suggested it myself, when the time comes, I still have some reservations...”

“...”

At first, I didn't understand the meaning of her words.

She suggested going to the magic academy, and when the time came, she had some reservations?!

But I soon understood what she meant, and I couldn't help but grin.

“What's wrong? Are you feeling lonely, Mulberry-san?”

“Ugh...”

It was Mulberry-san who suggested that I try going to the magic academy.

But now that I was about to leave home, she seemed to be feeling lonely.

Well, to begin with, she picked me up because she was lonely being alone in this forest.

And now she would be alone again.

“Well, if Mulberry-san really wants me to stay a little longer, I can do that. But I want to get Mulberry-san out of this forest as soon as possible.”

“I-I didn't say that. I'm not a child.”

Mulberry-san's cheeks turned slightly red as she pouted.

It looks like I won't be able to tease her for a while.

As I was feeling a little disappointed, Mulberry-san looked apologetic.

Today, I was able to see various expressions on Mulberry-san's face, which was rare.

"I feel really guilty keeping you here in this forest any longer, Sachie. I've been keeping you tied to this forest, so to speak. I really want you to see the wider world."

Kept me tied to this forest?

I've never felt that way.

But it seems like Mulberry-san feels responsible.

"Mulberry-san, you've done nothing wrong. I stayed in this forest because I wanted to, and I'm grateful for everything you've done for me. So you should be proud of yourself."

"..."

"Spare your huge boobs for someone else, Mulberry-san."

"Please return the moment of emotion I just had."

Mulberry-san seemed to be back to her usual expressionless self, but I was able to see a glimmer of a smile on her face.

Receiving the familiar half-lidded stare, I stick out my tongue a little and say "tehe".

That day, when I was abandoned by the Gracier family and attacked by magical beasts, if it weren't for Mulberry-san coming to rescue me, my life would have ended there.

After that, Mulberry-san even fed me, I was able to survive thanks to being taken in by her. And now, I can smile because of her.

So...

“Please wait and expect my repayment.”

“Okay.”

Finally, I turn my back to Mulberry-san. The only thing ahead is the forest road, and I feel his intense gaze on my back.

Once I start down this path, I won't be able to see Mulberry-san's face for a while. As soon as I think that, various emotions arise in my chest.

In that instant, I turned back and threw myself into Mulberry-san's arms.

“S-Sachie-chan!?”

“Mulberry-san, chu-nyu!”

As I'm lightly tickled by a sweet fragrance, I hug Mulberry-san with all my strength. How long did I do that for? Probably not even ten seconds, but it was enough to regain my energy.

When I raise my face, I see Mulberry-san blushing, looking embarrassed, which I love.

“Bye for now!”

This time, I finally turned my back to Mulberry-san and started running down the forest road. Ah, I can't believe I did something so uncharacteristic. Even now, my face is getting hot.

Other than the short time when I was mistreated at my parents' house, this is my first time leaving the forest of sinners.

It's uncharted territory for me to be alone in the outside world.

Plus, while Mulberry-san taught me the basics of magic, I don't know if I'll pass the entrance exam for the magic academy. My abilities are far from those of an ordinary mage.

Will my power really work? Will I be able to become a national mage?

To cover up those anxieties, I did that kind of thing.

As I mutter those excuses to myself without telling anyone, suddenly a black shadow jumps out from the side of the road. I quickly stopped and watched the black shadow.

“Gruuuuuuhhhh!”

To put it simply, it was a black wolf.

Sharp black fur, towering over human adults, and razor-sharp teeth and claws.

It was a rare magical beast that was not often seen around here.

As I thought about that, I felt a sense of familiarity with its appearance.

“Huh? I feel like I've seen your face somewhere. Could you be the son of the magical beast that attacked me back then?”

“Gruuuuuuh!”

The black wolf that attacked me right after I was abandoned in this forest. I was too scared to move at the time, and if Mulberry-san hadn't come to my rescue, I would have been killed.

“GRAAAAAHHHH!!!”

As if reminding me of that time, the black wolf lunged at me in the same way.

This time, however, I didn't freeze up and faced the magical beast with confidence.

“Live or die– Grim Reaper's Scythe– cut off the enemy's head in one fell swoop!”

This was my proof of growth.

“Devil's Announcement, Death Notice!”

Instantly, a suspicious light was emitted from my right hand.

At the same time, a black mist enveloped the black wolf's entire body, causing it to groan slightly.

Then, the black wolf, still with the momentum of its attack, passed me by and fell to the ground in a messy heap.

When I looked down, the black wolf had already stopped breathing.

“Just be glad you didn't get burnt to a crisp by Mulberry-san.”

Just like Mulberry-san did back then, I defeated the black wolf's magical beast in an instant and ran down the forest road again.

With this power, I will pass the entrance exam for the magic academy and eventually become a national mage, freeing Mulberry-san from the Forest of sinners.

Alright, let's do this! With that determination, I left the deep forest for the first time in about ten years.

While gazing at the retreating figure of her beloved disciple, Mulberry Malmurard secretly thinks to herself, 'Once again, I'm all alone.'

The bustling times now seem like a lie, as the surroundings are shrouded in silence. Mulberry had been accustomed to this solitude since birth. She was an orphan without any relatives and was raised in a church that also served as an orphanage.

Being the oldest child in the group, she was unable to fit in with the other children due to her age gap. Additionally, her shy personality further isolated her from others. When it was time for her to leave the orphanage, Mulberry was still all alone.

'Everyone will be transferred to another church,' the church that had taken care of them was unable to continue its activities as an orphanage due to financial difficulties. The children were to be transferred to different churches, but Mulberry, being the oldest, was the last one to be chosen and was left behind in the church without a new place to go.

Feeling guilty about the situation, Mulberry decided to make the brave choice of standing on her own two feet and becoming a magician. She knew she had a talent for magic, so she had no choice but to pursue the path of a sorceress to survive.

'Once again, I'm all alone,' she thought as she earned her living through magic while living day by day. Being born with the unique ability to hear the voice of magical elements, Mulberry had learned all sorts of magic during her time at the orphanage.

Finding work was not too difficult, but life was not comfortable. It was very challenging for an unlicensed magician to make a living solely through magic. Moreover, Mulberry was a young girl who was still unfamiliar with many aspects of life, making the idea of being completely self-sufficient impossible.

Eventually, she decided to enroll in a magic school. Her reasons included wanting to stabilize her living conditions by obtaining the

national magician certification, but also because her “sorcerer” powers were beginning to spiral out of control, causing her to hear the voice of magical elements more than necessary.

“Ugh...quiet...please, be quiet!” The excessive sound of magical elements was a pain beyond imagination. The incomprehensible voice was constantly ringing loudly in her head, causing unbearable sensations. The noise grew louder day by day, and Mulberry did not know how to stop it or control it. How could she stop the voice of the magical elements? Was it possible to at least suppress it? Why did she have this power in the first place? Did she unconsciously seek the voice of the magical elements to distract herself from her lonely fate?

Mulberry even began to doubt herself in these ways. To investigate these questions, she decided to enroll in a magic school. However, she was still alone there, as she had always been.

“I heard that girl can hear the voice of magical elements.”

“She’s a sorcerer, right? They say she’ll bring disaster if she’s nearby.”

“It’s creepy, she’s always talking to herself.”

Mulberry had to inform the school that she could hear the voice of a magical element and that she wanted to learn how to control her powers. However, the information leaked out from somewhere, and in no time, the whole school knew about her. They were all afraid of her “heretical” power as a sorcerer and found Mulberry’s agony from hearing the voice of magical elements unsettling. The students avoided her, and Mulberry spent her entire school life in solitude.

Eventually, she learned how to control her powers, but she remained alone.

After graduating and becoming a national sorcerer, Mulberry’s lonely days continued. She faced the voice of magical elements alone every day, creating new magic and presenting it at research meetings while also hearing the voice of magical elements. She enjoyed her research, but she felt as though there was a hole in her heart.

One day, a massive calamity struck the capital city due to a swarm of giant magical beasts.

“The calamity is caused by sorcerers!”

Due to this inexplicable disaster, the people in the capital city looked at Mulberry, the sorcerer, with suspicion. There had been a similar incident in the past, and no one doubted that Mulberry was the cause. She was immediately driven out of the city and imprisoned in a forest as a scapegoat.

“I’m alone again. It’s always been that way. Alone when I was born, alone in the orphanage, alone at school, and now, finally, alone in the magical country of Orchard. But being alone is nothing new to me, so it’s okay. It’s just that this time, it’s different.

It’s not the first time someone has denied my existence, and it’s not just one person, but the whole country rejecting me, leaving me locked up in a dark forest. I don’t mind being alone. In fact, I’m not comfortable with others around me.

But being forced to fight alone in a closed space where dangerous magical beasts roam freely is mentally draining. Plus, the thought of never being able to enter civilization or leave this dark forest again is an unimaginable loneliness.

For a year and a half, Mulberry had no human contact, spending time alone in this damp forest. She had lost all sense of purpose and hope, to the point where she even considered taking her own life.

That was until she heard another person’s voice, for the first time in a long while, in the forest. Mulberry considered it her first stroke of luck when she met Sachie, a girl who had been abandoned by a powerful magical family, similar to Mulberry’s situation.

Mulberry couldn’t abandon someone with the same circumstances as her, and talking to someone after such a long time filled her heart with warmth. Mulberry decided to take Sachie under her wing, and their days together became filled with joy.

Sachie seemed like a blessed existence, with luck always on her side, as if she were loved by the gods themselves. No accidents, injuries, or illnesses ever seemed to affect her, and her presence was always a joy to be around.

She even succeeded in casting probability magic, which is notoriously difficult, with ease, surpassing Mulberry, who had been considered a genius in the field.

As Mulberry watched her beloved student leave, she thought to herself, "I'm alone again." But this time, she didn't feel lonely. Mulberry had found a true companion, and with a bright future ahead of her, she waited for Sachie's return in their forest home, quietly smiling.

Chapter 6

“Entrance Exam”

The magical country of Orchard has grown around its central figures, the magicians. It was said to be about ten years ahead in civilization compared to other countries due to its advanced magic technology. However, in recent times, other countries have also incorporated magic technology, and the technological gap has almost disappeared.

The magical country of Orchard, which has become the center of the world, was once a poor and powerless country, even by global standards. Before being called the “Magical Country,” it was a pitiful “small country” that suffered constant damage from magical beasts. This was because the concept of “magic” had not yet been established, and there were no means to counter magical beasts.

Among them, Orchard suffered more damage from magical beasts compared to other countries and was said to have been severely afflicted. Suddenly, a “mysterious magician” appeared and saved Orchard from the damage caused by the magical beasts using the power of magic. The citizens who witnessed this hailed the magician as a “hero” and “the original magician,” greatly appreciating the existence of magic.

Eventually, those who wanted to learn this magic sought teachings from the original magician, and at first, modest seminars were held in small villages. Gradually, people gathered there, and the seminars expanded in scale until a learning facility was established there. This was later known as the “Magical Academy.”

Through the Magical Academy, magic technology spread throughout Orchard, leading to its growth from a weak country to a magical country. This is said to be the origin of the “Magical Country” and the “Magical Academy.”

“As Mulberry said.”

While walking towards the Magical Academy, I reviewed what Mulberry had taught me in my mind. Maybe history-related questions might come up in the written exam. I felt that the time spent walking was too precious to waste, so I decided to review for the entrance exam in my mind.

Anyway, I continued to walk towards the east, leaving the Forest of sinners behind. Blossom, the capital city, was quite far away, so it was recommended to stop by a village on the way and take a carriage.

Therefore, as soon as I arrived in the village, following Mulberry’s advice, I headed to the carriage station. The carriage heading east was just about to leave, so I hurriedly boarded.

“Excuse me! I’ll be boarding too!”

It had been quite a while since I had talked to anyone other than Mulberry, so my voice trembled a bit. I completed the necessary procedures in embarrassment and boarded the carriage.

Rocking back and forth, the carriage ride was a fresh experience for me since being kicked out of my home. As I gazed curiously out of the carriage window, we arrived at another village. We changed to another carriage heading further east and continued to sway back and forth.

After repeating this three times over several days, we finally arrived at our destination, the capital city of Blossom.

“Oh...”

That was my honest impression of the city – it was vast, crowded, and had tall buildings that made my neck hurt. It was a large circular city with more tall buildings compared to small villages. The largest castle at the very back was probably the royal castle.

It was so big that you could see it even from the town gate, and it was decorated luxuriously. I had never been to such a big city before, so it felt even more unusual. Furthermore, Blossom, the capital city, was known to be the most technologically advanced magical city in the world, so unfamiliar tools and vehicles could be seen everywhere.

Overwhelmed by the unfamiliar noise of the city, I began to walk down the main street nervously, looking around curiously. As I made my way through the crowd, I caught sight of a group of young people dressed in matching clothing out of the corner of my eye.

“Could it be...the students from the Magical Academy?”

The young people were all dressed in black-based clothing. The young men wore a thin jacket over a long coat, while the young women wore blouses with frills and skirts, and a small mantle on top. Each outfit was adorned with luxurious decorations that indicated high-quality clothing. Moreover, these people carried “staffs,” which could be considered a symbol of magicians, at their waists or on their backs.

I realized that the characteristics of the uniforms worn by students attending the Magical Academy that Mulberry had taught me about matched the attire of these young people. Therefore, I decided to follow them secretly and see where they were going.

As I had thought, following the young people led me to what appeared to be a school that resembled the academy. It was a clean-looking building with a blue and white color scheme. There was a large clock tower, a spacious schoolyard, a natural and lush courtyard between the school buildings, and even a dome-shaped facility that looked like a training ground off in the distance.

The young people in uniform blended in with this scenery, like a scene from a picture that captured a moment of their school life. These features matched the stories that Mulberry had told me.

“This is the Royal Harvest Academy of Magic... It’s a beautiful place,” I thought as I arrived at the school that I might attend.

Well, it's not like I've already passed the entrance exam or anything.

Anyway, I headed straight to the admissions office to complete the entrance procedures.

I walked through the gate and approached what seemed to be the office area with a glass counter where I found a receptionist. I spoke up in a soft voice, "Excuse me..."

"Yes?" she replied.

I told her that I wanted to apply for the entrance exam and she immediately explained the procedures to me and efficiently handled my request. She informed me that the deadline for applications was approaching, so there were many applicants lately.

"First, can you tell me your name?" she asked.

"Ah, yes. I'm Sachie. Sachie Malmurard," I said, changing my name at the last minute.

"I understand," she replied.

I can't use the name "Gracier" anymore since I've been expelled from the Gracier family. I don't even want to use that name anymore. That's why I borrowed Malmurard's name, but it shouldn't be a problem since it's not suspicious. Maybe it's not even a unique name.

Next, the receptionist asked me to confirm my magical energy.

"Oh, huh? Your age is 15, so that's not a problem, but your magical energy is very small. Are you really taking the entrance exam for a magic school?" she asked.

"Huh? Yes, well..." I replied, feeling embarrassed.

“I see...” she responded.

She looked at me with a skeptical gaze.

Well, it's not surprising. If I were in the receptionist's position, I would also think that taking the entrance exam with a magical energy level of 1 is a suicidal act.

After that, the receptionist issued the entrance exam ticket and gave me the final instructions.

“The entrance exam consists of a written test and a practical test. Also, please note that injuries or accidents are your own responsibility.”

“Huh? Injuries or accidents?” I asked, feeling surprised by the sudden and ominous words.

“The exam is designed to simulate combat with magical beasts, so every year there are many injuries. That's why we require you to acknowledge in advance that there is a possibility of injury or accidents.”

“I see...,” I said, realizing that what Mulberry had said was true.

The entrance exam seems to heavily emphasize the practical test, which is designed to simulate combat with magical beasts. This is probably why there are many injuries every year, making it a tough challenge for applicants.

It became clear at this point that this academy was a world of pure meritocracy, even in the entrance exam stage.

Well, I have trained for combat extensively, so I don't think injuries or accidents will happen easily.

Anyway, I replied, “I understand,” and successfully completed my

application.

Now, shall I take it easy until the day of the exam? I thought to myself as I left the academy and started searching for a place to stay on the main street of the town.

Eventually, I found a reasonably priced inn near the academy and decided to rent a room for an extended period of time. From then on, I enjoyed sightseeing in the town to my heart's content until the day of the exam.

On the day of the entrance exam, I was among a crowd of aspiring students, looking around nervously. In front of the main gate of the Magic Academy, many young people had gathered. As expected, it seemed like only children of good birth and social status had come, with many of them dressed elegantly. Among them, I felt a little out of place wearing the plain robe that Mulberry had given me.

The atmosphere wasn't particularly comfortable, but I didn't feel completely excluded either. Even though we came from different backgrounds, it seemed like we all shared the same feelings of anticipation.

Some were placing their hands on their chests and taking deep breaths, while others stood with their hands clasped in prayer. It seemed like everyone was nervous.

For children living in the Magic Nation of Orchard, entrance to the Magic Academy was a dream come true. We had only heard that the exam consisted of a written test and a practical test, and we had no idea what the content would be.

We had only been informed that the practical test would involve subduing magical beasts, which made many of us even more anxious. I was feeling quite nervous myself. I wondered what kind of test it would be, hoping that it wouldn't be too difficult.

"Now, we will begin the entrance exam. I am the examiner, Rezan Elve. We will start with the written test, so when your number is

called, please proceed to the designated classroom.”

Following the instructions of the elegant, purple-haired female examiner with glasses, we each went to our designated classrooms for the written test, which began immediately.

The written test consisted of relatively easy questions. They were about the principles of magic, the structure of magical substances, and other important issues related to magic. If you aspired to be a National Magician, the exam content was something you should have been able to answer easily.

I was able to think that way thanks to Mulberry’s teachings.

“Now, we will proceed to the practical test. Please come to the East Gate of the Royal Capital.”

Next up was the practical test. Following the instructions of the examiners, we left the academy and arrived at the East Gate of the Royal Capital.

Compared to the main gate in the north, the East Gate wasn’t particularly large. There was a small staircase made of cobblestones, and a road that seemed to cut through the grassland beyond it.

Since there were only a few people passing by, we moved towards the grass to avoid getting in the way before receiving an explanation of the practical test.

“The test involves subduing a designated magical beast in the forest located east of the capital.”

“A designated magical beast?”

Everyone had the same question, and after clearing her throat, the examiner continued, “Residents of the capital should know this, but that forest is called the ‘Forest of the Flower Monster’, and it’s home to a magical beast called the ‘Death Flower Ivy,’ which is shaped like a

giant flower. It's extremely troublesome because it approaches people to drain their life force and sometimes spreads poison. We want you, the examinees, to subdue that magical beast."

As someone who wasn't from the capital, it was new information for me. I could see the dense forest beyond the East Gate.

So, we just had to defeat the flower-shaped magical beast there. It seemed easy, but the other examinees showed a completely opposite reaction.

"Ugh, the Death Flower Ivy?"

"Of all the things, it had to be that for the exam..."

From their reactions, it seemed like the Death Flower Ivy was quite a formidable magical beast. I wondered how strong it was. Seeing the anxious expressions of everyone around me, I too started to worry.

To calm everyone's nerves, the examiner smiled maturely and continued, "However, it would be unreasonable to have examinees fight a dangerous magical beast at their level. Therefore, most of the Death Flower Ivies have been taken care of by National Magicians beforehand. The only ones remaining are in their pre-flowering 'bud state,' and those are the targets you will aim to subdue."

"In their pre-flowering state? How different are they from the original Death Flower Ivy?" I asked.

The examiner replied, "They are significantly weaker than the fully grown Death Flower Ivy, but they still possess some of its unique abilities, such as poison attacks. So, don't let your guard down."

"The ones that haven't bloomed yet are slow and weak. If you're aiming to enter the magic school, you should be able to defeat the magical beasts without any problems. Please defeat them and bring back a white spherical "embryo" that is inside the bud as proof of

your victory.”

Upon hearing this, everyone let out a relieved sigh, and I did too. It's not that I lack confidence, but I've never fought the magical beasts that appear around the royal capital before. They may be much stronger than the ones in the Forest of Sinners.

Knowing that the target for this task is not a very strong magical beast, naturally brings a sense of relief.

“By the way, during the exam, it's also possible to cooperate with other examinees to defeat the Death Flower Ivy.

However, since the number of Death Flower Ivies is limited, don't forget that it's still a competitive format.”

I conveyed the message indirectly that while cooperation is acceptable, it's difficult for all members to pass together. If five people cooperate, then they have to collect five embryo pearls, so it's important to keep in mind that this is a competition and to help each other moderately.

“The time limit is two hours. Examinees who bring back the embryo pearls of the Death Flower Ivy will be given extra points for their practical skills. It goes without saying, but any acts of violence or stealing from other examinees are strictly prohibited.”

With that, the examiner finished explaining the practical exam.

All the examinees turned their attention to the Forest of Strange Flowers.

And then...

“Alright, begin!”

At the signal from the examiner, everyone started running at once.

Chapter 7

Unfortunate Girl

As I walked through the Forest of Strange Flowers, I wondered where the floral-patterned magical beast could be. It had been about thirty minutes and I was having difficulty finding the creature, despite my belief that I was skilled at strolling through the woods. However, it seemed that it wasn't as easy as it was when I trained in the Forest of Sinners. So, I decided to relax and admire the colorful flowers blooming everywhere as I walked, and then...

“Waaah! Where did it go!?”

“Hmm?”

I heard a voice from somewhere – the weeping voice of a young girl that still had a hint of innocence. It didn't sound peaceful, so I went to check on her first.

Peering from behind a large tree, I saw a small girl with bright blue hair sitting in a slightly open area, crying uncontrollably. She was wearing a bright blue hooded cape, and her appearance made me want to call her “Little Red Riding Hood.”

She seemed to be a little thin, with a somewhat pale complexion, so I couldn't say she was well-off. Actually, I think she was one of the applicants for admission to the Magic Academy that I saw in the exam room.

What could she be doing in a place like this? She was crying and seemed to be looking for something as she stuck her head into nearby bushes, exclaiming, “It's not here, it's not here!”

Although I had no obligation to care, I couldn't ignore the sight of a

girl crying and lost in the forest. It was like seeing myself from the past.

“Um, excuse me?”

“Hyaa! H-hi!”

As I called out to her from behind, Little Red Riding Hood shuddered, and her shoulders shook in surprise. She turned her tear-soaked face towards me, wary and pulling back a little.

Trying not to startle her, I kept my distance and asked, “I’m sorry if I startled you. I heard your voice while walking through the forest and was wondering if there was something wrong...”

“Uh, uh... “

The girl continued to cry and look troubled, like dealing with a toddler. I’ve never had an opportunity like this before.

She still seemed a little wary, so I carefully chose my words and asked,

“You’re an applicant for the Magic Academy entrance exam, right? I’m a fellow applicant too. Is there something wrong?”

“Um, well...,” Little Red Riding Hood hesitated, looking frightened.

“I lost the embryonic seed of the Death Flower Ivy.”

“The embryonic seed? Wasn’t that something you were supposed to bring back to the examiner?”

“Yes. I had it in a pouch on my waist...”

Just then, the girl sniffled and wiped her nose.

Hearing her story so far, I was amazed that she had already acquired the embryonic seed. It hadn't been that long since the practical exam began. At the same time, I also sensed a certain amount of understanding about her situation.

Most likely, she lost the pouch containing the embryonic seed of the Death Flower Ivy while walking through the forest.

Just as I was thinking that, she added,

“As I stumbled over a tree root and fell, the pouch came off my waist and flew off, getting caught on a branch up in a tree. When I tried to get it back, a big bird took the pouch and flew away with it. As I chased after the bird, I tripped over another tree root and lost sight of it.”

“Is that so?”

Her story far exceeded my expectations. It wasn't just a matter of bad luck anymore. It was as if she had been abandoned by the gods. Indeed, her legs were very dirty, and her right knee was scraped badly. The pouch must have flown off her waist with great force. And then it got caught on a branch, taken by a bird, and lost again due to another fall.

She had obtained the embryonic seed of the Death Flower Ivy early on, but she had lost it due to such a script-like misfortune.

What was with this girl? Upon closer inspection, I could sense a foreboding aura emanating from her.

“I've always had really bad luck since I was a kid. There hasn't been a single day where something bad didn't happen to me. Injuries and illnesses are just a part of my daily life, and I've probably fallen more times than I can count. And if I drop a slice of bread, the side with jam always ends up facing downwards, and sometimes I even end up

dropping the whole plate and smashing it to pieces.”

“Maybe you should get a purification before your entrance exam?”

This child is probably what they call an “unlucky girl” depicted in stories. Unlike me, a lucky girl with a luck value of 999, this girl is probably...

“I’ve tried getting a purification before, but when I visited the church, they told me it’s simply because my luck value is 0.”

“There are people with 0 luck value?”

She is a super unlucky girl with a luck value of 0. I’ve heard that the average luck value for most people is around 50.

Even low scores usually have around 30, and there are hardly any people with a value below that. To have a luck value of 0 is unheard of. The luck value is determined by the brightness of one’s magic particles, but I wonder just how dark this girl’s magic particles are.

“Actually, it’s not just 0, but a negative value,” the appraiser told her. “I’ve never seen anything like it before, so let’s just call it ‘luck value 0’ for now.”

Negative value... it might be more appropriate to call it “misfortune value” instead of “luck value”. If this girl is constantly being bombarded with misfortunes like this, her misfortune value must be an astronomical number.

It’s a bit scary just being around her. I feel like I might get caught up in something bad too. So even though I feel sorry for her, I try to leave as soon as possible.

But...

“Oh no, I finally defeated the Death Flower Ivy and got the Embryo Pearl, but...”

I stop in my tracks as Little Red Riding Hood starts crying again, tears streaming down her face.

... Sigh, there's no helping it.

"I can help you look for it for a little while if you want."

"Huh?"

"I'm good at finding lost things."

Without hesitation, I stick my head into the nearby bushes, checking if the pouch was there. After confirming that it's not, I quickly moved on to the next bush.

Watching me search for the pouch, Little Red Riding Hood looks surprised.

"Ar-Are you sure? You have your own exam to worry about..."

"That's why it's only for a little while. If it takes too long, I'll stop. See, let's find it quickly."

"Yes, thank you very much."

Little Red Riding Hood responds with a stiff nod, looking surprised.

Well, it's no problem if it's just for a short time. I'm really good at finding lost things, and if I were to abandon her in this situation, I would be scolded by Mulberry in my heart.

So, Little Red Riding Hood and I started searching for the pouch together. After a while, we had searched through the bushes and trees around the area.

I take a deep breath, feeling like it's not around here.

"Let's move on a bit further. Over there, maybe?"

"Why? What makes you think that?"

"I just have a feeling that it might be there."

"Really? Just because of a hunch?"

Little Red Riding Hood looks extremely puzzled at my baseless confidence, but she follows closely behind me, nonetheless.

As we made our way through the forest, I spotted a large tree after pushing through a bush. And what do you know?

There was a blue pouch-like object lying near the base of the tree.

"Oh, my pouch!"

"See, I told you so."

As expected of a lucky girl like me.

With a smug look on my face, I proudly stood there, while Little Red Riding Hood, who had picked up my pouch, looked at me with a bewildered expression.

"H-how did you know exactly where the pouch was?"

"I didn't really know. I just had a feeling it was in this direction. You know, I have a really accurate intuition."

"Oh, I see."

The blue-haired girl looked dazed, as if she didn't quite understand what was going on.

Perhaps she was unsettled by my explanation, which amounted to just a hunch.

But that's really all it was – my intuition.

With this intuition, I've been able to find lost items and things people were looking for, like the magical tools Mulberry lost, or the medicinal herbs and spices he was searching for.

Maybe it's thanks to my luck stat of 999? I don't really know.

“Well, since we found the lost item, I'll be going now. Congratulations on passing!”

“Oh, thank you very much!”

With those words of gratitude from Little Red Riding Hood, I quickly left the scene.

After all, I still needed to get my hands on the embryo of the withered flower ivy.

Now that I've done a good deed, maybe the gods will show me a little mercy and give me the withered flower ivy embryo soon?

Specifically, please give me the withered flower ivy embryo as soon as possible!

As I pondered this, I searched for the target monster, the withered flower ivy, for about twenty minutes after parting ways with the girl.

But it never appeared in front of me.

“This is odd. Something’s really off here.”

How could I not find the creature I was looking for, when finding things was supposed to be my strong suit?

Aren’t I the lucky girl with a luck stat of 999 who can easily find other people’s lost items?

“Why is it that I can find other people’s lost items so easily, but can’t find anything I’m looking for?”

Perhaps luck isn’t the only factor here.

Or maybe that girl’s unlucky aura affected me and weakened my luck a bit?

It’s possible.

This is the first time I’ve struggled so much to find something.

Just as touching lucky items can increase one’s luck, maybe getting involved with an unlucky girl has threatened my luck.

Well, let’s stop joking around.

“Maybe it’s actually gathered around the entrance?”

I had assumed that the withered flower ivy would be concentrated in the depths of the forest, so I had been walking towards the back the whole time.

But what if that assumption was wrong?

Little Red Riding Hood had obtained the embryo of the withered flower ivy right after the practical test began, so maybe it’s actually gathered near the entrance.

That's what I thought, so I decided to turn back.

This was just another hunch without any evidence.

As I was walking back the way I came, I heard a voice again.

“Hey, give me that embryo.”

“Hmm?”

This time it was a male voice, and it didn't sound friendly.

Despite what had happened earlier, I walked towards the direction of the voice because it was in the direction I was headed.

I decided to observe the situation and run away if it looked too troublesome.

As I peeked from the bushes, I saw a narrow animal trail that cut through the forest, and four people standing there.

Three well-dressed boys and...

“Huh? Isn't that the girl from earlier...?”

Little Red Riding Hood, who had helped me find my pouch, was trembling and shaking uncontrollably.

Chapter 8

“Luck is also part of an ability.”

Why are you still in the forest? I thought you had already returned to the starting point of the exam and passed it by now.

Standing in front of her were three guys with good builds and a healthy lifestyle. They wore expensive-looking canes and accessories, giving off an air of wealthy nobility. They were probably also participants in the exam, as she had seen them during the written test.

I wonder what they’re doing here?

From this distance, I can’t tell the exact situation, but it seems like the three boys are cornering Little Red Riding Hood.

As evidence of this, the blonde boy who appeared to be the leader spoke with a domineering attitude towards the girl.

“Hand over the Embryo you obtained to us. It’s meaningless for a ‘commoner’ like you to have it. Only those of us from noble families, like me, should be admitted to the magic academy.”

Little Red Riding Hood remained silent, visibly shrinking under the intimidating behavior.

When I looked closely, I saw that the girl was holding a white ball about the size of a fist, which I assumed to be the Embryo of a Dead Flower Ivy, tightly in her small hand.

What an obvious attempt at extortion.

I came to watch out of curiosity, but this is a pretty sickening sight.

“You commoners are always trying to join us nobles in the magic academy’s entrance exams. Even though you know you’re inferior to us because of your lack of innate magical talent.” The leader continued to spout insults, while the other two boys followed suit.

The girl shrunk even further at their words.

Finally, the blonde boy snatched the Embryo from the girl’s hand with a quick motion.

He then continued to spew venom at Little Red Riding Hood, who was unable to do anything in response.

“We can’t afford to have one of our admission slots taken by someone who got lucky and happened to find and defeat a magical beast before us. It’s unacceptable for someone like you, who only got in through luck, to take the place of someone who has real talent.”

I wish she had said something like “I’m an unlucky girl with a luck score of 0, so this is not luck, but my own ability.”

Feeling compelled, I jumped out from behind the bushes and interjected with a sigh.

“Maybe luck is also part of ability, don’t you think?”

All eyes turned towards me.

Feeling uncomfortable with so many people looking at me, I regretted speaking up.

“Um, about earlier...”

“Hey, it’s Little Red Riding Hood again,” I said, waving my hand at her in surprise.

Seeing my carefree attitude, the blonde boy frowned and asked, “Who are you?”

“I’m a participant in the same exam as you,” I replied.

I immediately regretted getting involved in such a troublesome situation.

I should have just looked the other way and left. But I couldn’t let those who belittled luck go unchallenged.

Above all, I couldn’t just ignore the sight of three guys surrounding a little girl.

Was I always this righteous?

“So, you’re a participant too,” the blonde boy said, grinning arrogantly when he realized who I was.

Suddenly, he pointed to a badge-like object on his chest and asked, “It looks like you don’t have a family emblem. Did you forget it? Which noble family do you come from?”

“Family emblem?” I had no idea what he was talking about.

Was he referring to the badge on his chest?

However, I understood that he was asking about my background.

Did it have anything to do with the current situation? Well, it didn’t matter.

“I was born in a remote mountain village,” I replied after thinking for a moment.

“Huh? Ha ha, sorry, sorry, did I mishear you? You said a remote

mountain village, right?" The blonde boy laughed loudly in the forest.

"That's what I said," I replied.

He continued to laugh loudly, his voice echoing through the forest.

"Hahaha! I never thought a country bumpkin like you would actually be taking the entrance exam for the prestigious Royal Harvest Academy of Magic. So, you're from a mountain village, huh..."

The person chuckled, his laughter sounding forced.

Then, two other people spoke up, their voices dripping with venom and confidence.

"It gives me the chills just thinking about the fact that someone like that is taking the same exam as us. A talentless commoner thinking they can stand on the same stage as us is a big mistake."

"These arrogant commoners are a real problem. They take the exam knowing they won't pass and just end up getting in the way."

Finally understanding what the family emblem meant, I realized that those born into prestigious families wore them on their chests to show off their heritage and looked down on us commoners who didn't have one.

It was ridiculous.

"Don't assume we'll fail without even trying. This exam isn't about separating nobles and commoners; it's about skill.

We don't know who will pass yet."

The examiner had only asked us to bring back a Deathflower Ivy Embryo. They never said they were only accepting nobles.

Just because magical talent was often inherited didn't mean those without noble blood couldn't be skilled.

The golden-haired person frowned and retorted, "Magical talent is usually inherited from bloodlines. Don't you know that?"

"Even so, that doesn't prove that you're better than us. In fact, the child who defeated the magical beast and got the embryo first is more skilled. From an outside perspective, that child is better than all of us here."

"That was just luck, like I said before. The world of magic is tough, and luck won't help you survive. That's why we'll be the ones to send you on your way instead of wasting your life trying to become a mage."

The golden-haired person played with the embryo they took from the blue-haired girl, confidently claiming that we wouldn't become mages.

"Go back to your mountain village or wherever you came from before you die in vain."

As if on cue, the other two burst into loud laughter, and the three of them went off somewhere together. I chased after them, trying to stop the golden-haired trio.

"Hey, give that back! It's against the rules to take an embryo from another examinee!"

"Harming someone to take it is against the rules. We didn't lay a hand on that commoner."

"How can you twist the rules like that?!"

Unexpectedly, someone grabbed the hem of my shirt from behind, and I couldn't keep chasing after them. When I turned around, the blue-haired girl with a face about to cry was standing there.

“Please, it’s okay. Don’t worry about my embryo.”

“Why not? They’re trying to pass with an embryo you got, not their own power.”

Wasn’t she going to try to get it back?

But while we were arguing, the trio had disappeared from sight. The girl and I exchanged awkward glances in the ensuing silence.

Why did she stop me? I wondered. Then the girl in the blue hood explained apologetically.

“If we keep fighting, they might do something terrible to you too. I don’t want anyone else to be unhappy because of me...”

...

Her words were strange. It was as if she had been involved in making someone else unhappy before. I didn’t care about that, and I didn’t think it would happen to me, but the girl looked sad and didn’t make any move to chase after the trio.

Perhaps she was worried about not just me but also the trio being dragged into something unhappy?

But why bother worrying about them? Shouldn’t we want to involve them instead?

“Well... there’s no use crying over spilt milk.”

I can see neither their figure nor hear their footsteps anymore.

I let out a big sigh and decided to give up on the embryo.

The person who obtained it said it was enough, so I don't need to interfere anymore.

That leaves me with only one option.

“If we can get a new embryo and find the Dead Flower Ivy soon, everything will be fine.”

It has only been about 40 minutes since the practical exam started.

We still have plenty of time to find Dead Flower Ivy.

So giving up now is not a good idea.

But the girl spoke in a disheartened voice and said something that sounded like she had already given up on the exam.

“Anyway, someone else will just take it again. It was foolish of someone as unlucky as me to try to become a national magician. I was born a commoner and out of place...”

“...”

As I listened to her voice gradually becoming tearful, I couldn't help but feel a pang in my chest.

The girl didn't move from where she was standing.

In fact, she turned her back towards the exit rather than deeper into the forest and started walking in that direction.

It seemed like she was planning to leave already.

Even if she got the embryo of the Dead Flower Ivy again, she thought someone else would take it.

The insults from those three people had a significant impact on her.

It's not surprising that she's becoming so pessimistic.

Besides, she seems to have a weak personality, which probably made the deep wound in her heart even worse.

If that's the case...

"Then I'll protect you this time."

"Huh?"

"I'll stay by your side and protect you from anyone trying to take the embryo. I'll definitely drive away those mean-natured nobles. So let's do our best in the exam together."

As I watched the girl's back get further away, I couldn't help but call out to her.

And in my eagerness to not let her go, I made a suggestion that might have been too hasty.

Perhaps it was an overly protective suggestion.

But whether it was effective or not, the girl with blue-colored hair stopped walking.

She turned around and tilted her face, which was streaked with tears, with a puzzled expression.

"Why are you doing this?"

"Huh?"

“Why are you helping me? Both now and earlier, why did you do this for me?”

Hmm, why did I want to help her?

When she asked me that again, I couldn't come up with a clear answer.

Why did I want to help this girl?

Not just now, but earlier as well.

I helped her look for her pouch for a brief moment.

Was it because she was a cute girl in distress? Did I feel sorry for her?

Of course, those were factors.

But the biggest reason was...

“If you were my benefactor, I think you would do the same thing.”

“Huh? Benefactor?”

“She's the one who inspired me to become a magician, and she's also the one who saved my life. She's an incredibly cool magician, and I want to be like her someday.”

If it were Mulberry watching that scene instead of me, I think her kind heart would have done the same thing without hesitation.

So to put it simply, this is me imitating Mulberry.

Imitating someone I admire. I thought that by imitating them, I could

get closer to them.

I'm not particularly "kind," and I have a selfish personality where I just push through with what I think is right.

"...It makes me very happy that you want to help me, but I still think it's best if you don't get too involved with me."

"Why?"

"...Because everyone becomes unhappy when they're around me."

The girl had a contemplative expression on her face.

If being around her makes everyone unhappy... Well, it's true that nothing good has happened since I met her.

But nothing particularly bad has happened either.

And...

"Oh, that's okay. Even though I may not look like it, my luck is my strong suit. When it comes to happiness, I have confidence that I can beat anyone else."

"Well, even if you say that, it's too late once something irreversible happens..."

I started to blabber, so I took the girl's hand in a hurry.

"Let's go find a magical beast as soon as possible since time is running out. Even if being with you makes me unhappy, isn't it better to think about what to do to make us happy?"

"T-That's reckless...!"

She seemed like she wanted to say something, but I didn't give her a chance and pulled her along.

She followed me quietly without resisting, so I realized that she had agreed to take the exam with me.

Well, it's more like she gave up.

My perseverance won out. She seemed like the kind of person who is easily pushed around, just as she appears.

And now I realize something.

"Come to think of it, we don't even know each other's names. My name is Sachie. What's your name, little Red Riding Hood?"

"U-Um, my name is Miltie. Miltie Glass."

"Miltie... can I call you Mil? Nice to meet you, Mil."

"U-Um, nice to meet you too."

And so, Mil and I teamed up to take the entrance exam.

Mil didn't seem very enthusiastic about it, though.

But still, this girl...

"You will never become a magician."

They said it so bluntly to her.

That's because she was a commoner, she didn't have the talent for magic and couldn't become an magician.

But that's not true.

She defeated the Dead Flower Ivy before anyone else and obtained the embryo.

And she did it alone. Although she appeared timid, she is probably one of the most talented applicants.

It would be a waste to bury that talent.

I just thought it would be great if I could catch a glimpse of that talent up close and personal.

That's why I wanted to help her.

Chapter 9

“One Hit Kill”

It's been about twenty minutes since Mil and I started working together, or rather, since we introduced ourselves, began working with her.

The flower-shaped demon beast, Death Flower Ivy, still hasn't been found. We still have plenty of time, but I would be happy if we could find it sooner rather than later.

It's strange. Wasn't I supposed to be a super lucky girl with a luck value of 999? Maybe it's because there's a super unlucky girl next to me that my good luck is overshadowed.

Anyway, since we had some free time walking in the forest, I asked Mil about something that had been on my mind.

“Why were you still in the forest?”

“Huh?”

“I found your pouch about thirty minutes ago, so I thought you would have left by now. You've already passed the test, right?”

It shouldn't have taken more than ten minutes to leave the forest from where we found the pouch. Yet, Mil had come all the way to the deeper parts of the forest where I was searching.

It was clearly odd. Did she get lost because of bad luck?

“Um... I was looking for you, Sachie-san,” Mil said.

“Me? Why?”

“I felt bad about not thanking you for helping me find my pouch, so I wanted to help you out. But then I started to worry that being around you might bring bad luck. I was thinking about what to do when I got lost in the forest and ended up walking on an animal trail, where I ran into those three people.”

“You’re very unlucky, as usual,” I said.

As expected of the unlucky girl with a luck value of 0. In the end, her bad luck led her down an unfortunate path.

But why did those people confront her just by passing by on the road? Wouldn’t they just keep going like normal?

If they had seen each other at the exam venue, they would have known that they were both exam participants, but Mil couldn’t have known that she already had the embryo of the Death Flower Ivy.

Feeling my inner doubt, Mil seemed to sense it and spoke apologetically.

“At first, they talked to me kindly. They asked if I had obtained the embryo of the Death Flower Ivy, and when I answered and showed it to them as a reference, their attitude suddenly changed.”

“Why would you be so stupidly honest and show it to them?”

It’s better to be more suspicious of others. I don’t think it’s good to answer honestly to everything asked of you.

Mil then made a tearful excuse.

“Bu-but they looked like they were in a lot of trouble...!” Mil protested.

“That’s just an act. They probably had the intention of stealing the embryo from a weak-looking person like you. You shouldn’t just reach out to someone who looks like they’re in trouble. Nothing good ever comes of it, so it’s best to ignore it,” I replied.

“Then why did you help me?” Mil asked.

“Um...”

I was hit with a great comeback. I even thought to myself, “She’s right.”

I had also reached out to this girl in distress. Yet, I was giving advice like I knew better, which was clearly contradictory.

Mil seemed to realize that I was saying something weird, and looked at me as if to say, “Isn’t that contradictory?”

“You little Red Riding Hood...” I teased.

“Please, stop it! Don’t take off my hood! Don’t turn it inside out!” Mil pleaded.

Having played a harmless prank, I felt better. While engaging in this banter, Mil and I continued deeper into the forest.

Honestly, we were just wandering around without any real direction, but would we really be able to find the Death Flower Ivy like this? Not just for Mil’s sake, but for mine as well.

With this in mind, I asked Mil why she had taken the entrance exam for the Magic Academy.

“Huh?” Mil looked surprised.

“Even though you were intimidated by those aristocrats, you seemed to really want to attend the Magic Academy. Do you have a reason for

wanting to become a National Mage?” I asked.

I had been wondering about this for a while now. I already knew that Mil was a timid and unlucky girl. That’s why some things about her seemed strange.

As the name suggests, a Mage is someone who uses “magic” as a “technique” for fighting. Nowadays, even those who contributed to the development of magical technology are also called Mages, so the definition is becoming vague.

Many of those who are called Mages are those who make a living by hunting magical beasts. Hunting magical beasts requires considerable mental strength. It’s hard to imagine a timid person like Mil even standing in front of one.

However, Mil seemed to have a desire to become a National Mage, more than anyone else. For this reason, she seemed to be determined to attend the Magic Academy and was participating in this exam with a strong determination.

“I guess it was foolish of me to think that someone as unlucky as me could become a national alchemist,” said Mil, who had just been insulted by some of the noble students. But deep down, she probably didn’t want to give up, because her expression at that moment looked very regretful.

What could be the reason that drove Mil to have such a determination?

“If you don’t want to answer, it’s okay. I may have asked an impolite question,” I said.

“No, it’s not something I need to hide,” replied Mil, who then told me the reason why she participated in the entrance exam.

“I want a lot of money,” she said.

“Money?”

“A lot of money. Otherwise, my mother won’t be able to live for more than five years,” Mil said.

She had a materialistic thought despite her gentle appearance, but it seemed that her mother’s situation was related to her desire for money.

“My hometown is a small village called Olivie, where my mother works in the fields. She raised me by herself, and until a few years ago, she was very healthy and active, but one day, she suddenly collapsed while working in the field and was diagnosed with a serious illness.”

“A serious illness?”

“Yes. It seems that she needs to be treated in a big hospital in the capital city of Blossom, and we need to pay a huge medical fee that small clinics in the nearby towns and villages cannot handle.”

“So, you need a lot of money?”

Mil nodded with a serious expression.

“Yes. If I become a national alchemist, the country will provide a huge research grant for magical research, and I plan to use that money to cure my mother’s illness. If I graduate from the magic school as soon as possible, I can just make it within the five-year time limit.”

“So that’s why Mil wants to enroll in the magic school and become a national mage,” I said.

As a farmer’s daughter, it would be nearly impossible for her to earn the huge medical expenses within five years. She could borrow money from someone if she had someone to rely on, but given the amount she needed, it would have been difficult.

Becoming a national mage was the only option left for her. After all, Mulberry had also saved up a considerable amount of money after becoming a national mage, so it wouldn't take her long to save up for the medical expenses.

If she had some talent in magic, it was only natural for her to come up with this idea. And if she had as much talent as I predicted, it was no surprise that this idea came to her first.

"Maybe my mother's illness was caused by my misfortune, so this is something I absolutely must do," Mil said.

I understood Mil's reasons for wanting to become a national mage once again, and I couldn't help but smile quietly. I felt a sense of closeness with her and found myself telling her my story.

"I also have someone I want to help desperately," I said.

"Huh?"

"To help that person, I thought becoming a national mage was the best option, so I'm taking the entrance exam at this magic school," I explained.

I didn't tell her to reciprocate her explanation, but rather because I wanted her to know. I couldn't help feeling happy when I realized we shared the same goal.

"So let's both pass the entrance exam and graduate successfully," I said.

"Yeah, that would be great," Mil replied, nodding slowly.

She smiled quietly beneath her hood, and I felt even happier. But then, suddenly, Mil's gaze was drawn to something in the depths of the forest.

“I found it,” she said.

“What did you find?” I asked, confused.

Without answering, Mil ran off, and I followed her. Soon, we came across a huge green monster, a magical beast that looked like a combination of a flower bud and a vine.

The bud had three grooves that made it look like a face, and the beast had numerous vines growing from its lower half that it used as legs, crawling on the ground. It was creepy, to say the least.

“Could this be the Dead Flower Ivy?”

“Yes, that’s right. It’s a bit bigger than the one I fought before,” replied Mil, indicating that this was indeed the target they were supposed to defeat.

But how did Mil detect the location of the Dead Flower Ivy so quickly, even though she was still a considerable distance away from the beast?

“Did you use ‘scouting magic’?” I asked.

“Yes, I did,” Mil confirmed.

I remembered that Mulberry had taught me about this. Scouting magic allows the user to scatter fragments of their own magical energy and sense the magic of others. Beasts have magical energy flowing through their bodies, and they unconsciously release that energy to protect themselves. As a result, scouting magic detects beasts more strongly than humans.

I thought they were still quite far away, but apparently, scouting magic could detect them from that distance. Mulberry had mentioned that the detection range of scouting magic varies depending on the user’s magical power.

Suddenly, the Dead Flower Ivy began to growl and swell up like a bud in front of them. At the same time, its vine-like limbs flailed around and whipped the ground like a whip.

“That thing seems really temperamental,” I commented.

Mil and I dodged the flying debris and mud while keeping a safe distance. If those vine-like limbs grabbed onto our arms or legs, we’d be in trouble. We also had to be careful of the yellow-green liquid dripping from the bud at the top of the beast, which was probably the “poison” the examiner had warned us about. She had mentioned that it could absorb life force as well. Maybe it is absorbed through those vines?

“I’ll stop the beast’s movements first, and then you can attack,” Mil suggested.

I stepped in front of her and told her to stay back while facing the raging beast. She seemed to be suggesting something, but I didn’t think it was necessary.

“It’s okay, Mil doesn’t have to do anything. As thanks for finding the beast, I’ll take care of it alone,” I said, dismissing Mil’s suggestion.

“What?” she exclaimed, surprised.

Without hesitation, I raised my right hand and aimed it at the Dead Flower Ivy. I narrowed my eyes and focused on my target.

“But it’s too dangerous for one person alone! The only time I defeated a Dead Flower Ivy by myself was when it was just born, and this one is about to bloom...” Mil protested.

I smoothly chanted the familiar incantation: “Life or death – Death Scythe – Reap the enemy’s head in one fell swoop.”

To finish it off in one blow, I finished the spell: “Devil’s message – Death Notice!”

In an instant, a jet-black light shone from my hand, and the Dead Flower Ivy was enveloped in a black mist. The giant plant, which had been thrashing around, suddenly froze in place.

“F... shaa...!” It made no more sounds and the next thing it emitted was a loud thud as it collapsed onto the ground.

It wouldn’t move again; it was in eternal slumber.

“There you go, one-hit kill!” I exclaimed.

Mil, who had been silent and frozen, finally spoke up in a surprised tone: “Um, what kind of magic was that?”

“Oh, that? It was the instant death magic, Devil’s Message Death Notice,” I replied, only to realize something.

Devil’s Message Death Notice, an instant death magic spell, wasn’t commonly known in the world of magic. It was simply a defective spell that only worked once in a million uses for ordinary magicians.

“Ahahaha, I guess you don’t know this kind of minor magic. It’s a flawed magic that’s useless to regular sorcerers.”

While casually explaining, I was able to cut off the outer layer of the bud with a knife. Then, I found a fist-sized white ball deep inside and cut it off last. This is the embryo, right?

I carefully wiped off the venom attached to the knife with a handkerchief and put it back in my pocket. Finally, I turned to Mil who was still not convinced and decided to explain the instant death magic further.

” “Instant death magic” is a magic that, simply put, can rarely cause instant death to the opponent, but no one uses it because it hardly ever works. Well, in my case, my luck is high, so I can definitely make it work.”

Even after explaining it in detail, Mil's mouth remained open in disbelief. Using instant death magic relying on luck is apparently quite rare. In fact, I'm probably the only one in the country who does it.

"But talking about my magic is boring, right? I have to find another Instant death magic as soon as possible."

I wanted to end the conversation and resume the search, but suddenly we heard the distinctive voice of the Death Flower Ivy again.

Mil's reconnaissance magic must have been released because she was also surprised and turned to where the voice came from. We looked at each other and immediately ran towards the direction of the voice, thinking that we could get the second embryo.

Then, we saw a flower-shaped magical beast, the Death Flower Ivy, as we expected. However, there were several unexpected things that came into view.

Firstly, there was not only one but five Death Flower Ivies. The sight of five giant plant-type magical beasts together was spectacular.

And the other surprising thing was...

"Why the hell isn't our magic working on them?!"

"Don't come over here! Stay away!"

"Don't panic, you two!"

The three noble boys, who had stolen the embryo from Mil earlier, were there. They seemed to be engaged in a battle with the five Death Flower Ivies, but they were clearly on the defensive. Eventually, they were cornered at the base of a large tree that looked like a wall, and there was no escape route left.

Seeing all this information at once, both Mil and I were stunned. However, the most surprising thing was...

“What’s going on with those things?”

The heads of the five Death Flower Ivies had bright red flowers blooming instead of pre-flowering plant buds, and I couldn’t understand why.

Chapter 10

The Mean Lucky Girl

“Wh-why are there five blooming dead flower Ivies...?”

“Blooming...?”

Hearing Mil’s murmurs, I suddenly remembered something.

Come to think of it, before the start of the practical exam, the examiner had said something.

That the pre-blooming buds of the dead flower Ivy are overwhelmingly weaker than the blooming state.

In other words, the blooming dead flower Ivies over there are stronger than the ones we just defeated that were on the verge of blooming.

Certainly, their size and strength seem to be higher from here.

Those poor rich kids are being attacked by such a dangerous magical beast, and on top of that, five of them at the same time. It’s just their bad luck.

There is no escape route since they are crawling around the thick roots of the big tree.

Or rather, if it continues like this...

“Don’t die, you three.”

I muttered to myself, analyzing the situation calmly.

Currently, I'm using magic to keep the dead flower Ivies in check, preventing them from approaching us.

But gradually, magic will run out and become unusable.

When a command is given to a magical element, it consumes vitality to use magic, so you cannot transmit orders to that magical element for a while.

So the magicians give orders to the next magical element and continue firing magic one after another, but if the amount of magical elements is low, then they will...

"What, magic won't come out!? Damn, am I already out of magical elements!"

It becomes unusable immediately.

It seems that the other two besides the blondie have already run out of magical elements.

Therefore, the blondie starts to keep the five dead flower Ivies in check alone, but the distance is gradually becoming smaller, and now the base of the big tree is at his back.

It's already a hopeless situation.

At that moment, the blondie moves his gaze as if clinging to something, and eventually his eyes catch us.

"Y-You commoners! What are you standing there gawking for! Come on, lend me a hand!"

“Lend a hand?”

I feel a little angry at his words and unintentionally grimace, and then he says something that further spoils my mood.

“If you’re a commoner, then obey what the nobles say! You must do everything to drive these things away!”

“...Not again.”

I’m already tired of hearing that line.

It’s irritating enough that he was mean to Mil earlier, but even in this situation, he still insists on such stupid stubbornness.

I couldn’t help but sigh in exasperation and decided to vent my pent-up frustration as a cold emotion.

“Isn’t magical talent usually determined by bloodline? Then why don’t you noble-born people defeat them quickly?”

“W-What did you say!?”

The blondie raised his voice in anger and surprise.

“If you had just asked for help normally, I would have helped you normally, but if you’re going to talk like that, I might as well leave,” I said.

“Don’t joke around at a time like this! This is no laughing matter...” the blondie started to say.

At that moment, one of the dead flower Ivies suddenly accelerated and approached the group of three.

“Fuushaaa!!”

“Damn it!”

The blondie quickly prepared his right hand.

“Enemy is right in front of us – become one with the raging flames – shoot through the magic – Flaming Sphere!”

A bright red fireball was released from the blondie’s right hand and hit the approaching dead flower Ivy with a reasonably powerful blow. His magic power seemed quite high as expected from someone who’s just boasting.

However...

“Damn it, why!?”

The dead flower Ivy only flinched slightly and was hardly wounded. It seemed that the magical protection layer, “Mago-rou,” created by the power of the magical elements, was quite strong. It was unlikely that the layer could be broken by a simple magic spell. This seemed to further enrage the already angry Ivy.

The blondie couldn’t help but curse and tried to counterattack with a different spell.

“Don’t hesitate – burn to the bone with the scorching meteor – Little Sun Little Flare!”

But...

“...It won’t come out!?”

Nothing came out of the hand he raised, and only the blondie’s scream

echoed through the forest.

He had run out of magical elements.

Now, there was no one left who could use magic.

As if they knew it, the dead flower Ivies approached them while swaying their flowers, seemingly amused. They surrounded the three who had been pushed to the base of the big tree while scattering the dissoluble poison around them.

It was a hopeless situation.

Watching from the sidelines, I couldn't help but say mean things to the stubborn nobles who were still insisting on their pride.

"If you don't hurry, the vine will entangle you and suck your life force. The poison also looks extremely painful," I said, teasingly.

"..."

I asked them once again, "Come on, what do you want? Regardless of being a commoner or a noble, as fellow applicants, tell me."

It might sound like a threat at this point, but I still wanted to make them admit that we were on an equal footing. It might not mean anything, but I just wanted to hear it from their own mouths.

This isn't an exam to sort by social class, but rather an exam to enter the magical academy.

Then, the blondie let out a loud scream while looking at the gigantic magical beast in front of him with frustration.

"H-Help me!!!"

I couldn't help but let out a smile.

“Well done,” I said as I approached the swarm of Deadly Ivies. I then aimed my palm at the one closest to the blonde-haired ones.

“[Life or Death – The Grim Reaper's Scythe – Cut the Enemy's Neck with a Single Thought].”

With a single strike, I killed the magical beast that they couldn't even scratch.

“[Devil's Announcement – Death Notice]!”

I killed it in one blow, and the Deadly Ivy that was enveloped in black mist collapsed onto the ground as if its soul had been taken away.

The obochamatachi (spoiled brats) opened their eyes wide at the sight.

“That...that only took one hit...?”

“That's...impossible...”

This is not a lie, but an undeniable fact.

These blooming Deadly Ivy have very sturdy magical clothing, which makes them impervious to ordinary magic.

However, my specialty is instant death magic, which forces an opponent to die by “probability” regardless of their magical clothing.

And with my luck stat of 999, it transforms into a guaranteed success instant death magic.

Anyway, the encirclement of the Deadly Ivy has collapsed.

Those three should be able to escape through the gap.

Or so I thought...

“...is one of them injured?”

I don't know if he was hit by a Deadly Ivy vine or if he tripped, but the brown-haired boy seemed to be struggling with a leg injury.

If that's the case, just taking down one won't be enough to let all three of them escape.

So the only option is to “quickly” defeat all the Deadly Ivy.

If I take my time and defeat them one by one, there's a risk that other Deadly Ivy will attack the three of them.

However, my instant death magic targets only one person.

I could use “that magic” to wipe them all out, but the Deadly Ivy are moving around unpredictably, and it's hard to aim.

I might even end up involving the three people in the back.

At that moment, I suddenly turned around and looked at my partner behind me.

“Hey, Mil, can you stop their movements?”

“Huh?”

“If you can buy us a little time, that would be great.”

When we worked together before, Mil said she could “stop the movements of the Deadly Ivy”.

Maybe she’s good at that kind of magic.

I can also use my confinement magic, “The Fate’s Trick Fall Tune”, but that’s a single-target spell too.

So I asked Mil, hoping that she could immobilize all of them at once...

“Y-Yes, I’ll try.”

As I hoped, Mil nodded vigorously.

She positioned herself behind the remaining four Deadly Ivy and pressed her hands to the ground, narrowing her round eyes.

“[Filled with the din of a tumultuous sea – the breath of the blue dragon – grant peace and silence to this land]”

After completing a chant that I didn’t recognize, she activated the spell.

“[Niflheim, the Frozen Land]”.

It felt as if the mood had changed in an instant, and the season had suddenly shifted, as the cold air filled the surroundings. The chilled air blew in from the ground, sending shivers down my spine. Before I knew it, transparent ice had formed at the feet of the withered ivy.

“Fu...sha...!”

She had completely immobilized them. It was unexpected. I had never thought it would be so easy to catch the withered ivy like this. They were unable to move, only making “fu-sha-fu-sha” noises. The ice was

so hard that they couldn't break free. It was proof that her magic power was quite high. Moreover, she had frozen only the magic beasts without involving the nobles behind them.

The trio were surprised by her power, and their mouths hung open in shock. They had said that magical talent was determined by bloodlines, but there were exceptions. Sometimes, children born into ordinary families with no magical background would turn out to be prodigies. I had learned this from Mulburry-san. I was probably one of those exceptions.

“Thank you, Mil. Leave the rest to me and step back. It's a bit dangerous.”

“Huh, yes...?”

I had twenty, no, thirty seconds with this. That was enough. I just needed a little more room for error since I wasn't used to using this magic. I pushed Mil back and stepped forward, taking aim at the center of the withered ivy with my right hand.

Then, I recited the incantation firmly, pulling it out of the back of my mind.

“I am the judge——The hammer of justice——I will punish the wicked.”

Everyone looked puzzled at the unfamiliar incantation. Sensing their confusion, I raised my voice to reveal the true nature of the magic.

“Gate to Hell, Hell's Gate!”

In an instant, a jet-black magic circle spread out in the center of the withered ivy. I managed to cover only the four withered ivy without involving the trio behind me. Each of the withered ivy was enveloped in black mist within the range of the magic circle, and the surrounding scenery was dyed black in no time.

“Fusha!”

The flowery parts that the withered ivy had been moving around quickly began to wilt, as if decaying. The poison that they had been scattering around to resist had completely stopped.

Before they realized it, the withered ivy were unable to make any noise, and the surroundings had fallen into complete silence. The giant flower-shaped magical beasts had all perished, still trapped in ice.

“Alright, it’s over!”

The trio were speechless and dumbfounded as they watched all of the withered ivy fall in an instant. Meanwhile, Mil, who was behind me, seemed less surprised as she had seen a similar scene before. However, she seemed to be questioning something.

“S-Sachie-san, was that magic just now the same type as the one earlier? The incantation was a little different...”

“That’s right. The magic I just used is also a type of instant death magic called Hell’s Gate. Unlike Death Notice, it can cast instant death magic on many magical beasts at once.”

I had targeted a specific location, deployed a magic circle, and used instant death magic to lower the probability of the targets within the range of the magic circle surviving.

Like Death Notice, the success rate of Hell’s Gate depended on the user’s luck value. In other words, if someone with a luck value of 999 like me were to use it, the magic circle would definitely turn into instant death magic that kills anyone within it.

“Well, it’s not very practical because there’s a possibility of involving those around you. It’s also difficult to deploy the magic circle in the desired location, and it surprisingly consumes a lot of magical power,”

I said.

“I see...”

Watching us converse so naturally, the nobles were left speechless.

Eventually, the shock was overcome by frustration, and the nobles glared at us through gritted teeth.

“What’s your deal?”

Their stubbornness was understandable given the overwhelming difference in power. They probably never expected to be saved so easily by the commoners they once looked down upon.

However, I reiterated the facts.

“You understand now, right? When fighting magical beasts, your status is just decoration. Saying ‘I’m a noble’ won’t make the magical beasts die on their own, and it won’t help you win a war against another country. All that matters is the power you can bring to the table right now. So, I think it’s best to stop evaluating your opponent based on their status alone.”

Silence fell upon the group, and I wondered what they were thinking.

Realizing that further preaching was pointless, I decided to do what we came here for and leave.

“Also, since we helped you out, please return the Death Flower Ivy embryo that you took from this girl. I hope you’re not going to start making excuses about being a noble at this point,” I added.

“Tch,” the blondie muttered while reaching into his pocket and tossing the embryo to us.

I caught it safely and handed it back to its rightful owner, Mil.

“Thank you very much,” she said gratefully.

Now that we had both embryos, all that was left was to bring them back and pass the exam successfully. We had also gotten our revenge on the noble group and retrieved the embryos, so we decided to leave promptly.

But before that, I approached one of the deceased Death Flower Ivy and took out a knife from my pocket. I gently scraped the flower and peered inside, muttering “My condolences” towards the deceased creatures.

Inside the fully bloomed Death Flower Ivy, there was no white spherical embryo, but instead, there were blackened seed-like objects.

“Well then, we’ll be going now. You better make the most of the remaining time. There’s still more than half of it left, so if you truly have talent in magic, you can find the Death Flower Ivy within that time,” I added sarcastically towards the group.

With that, Mila and I left the area.

Chapter 11

Unaware Genius

T/N: Hey guys, sorry for not posting, my laptop broke, literally and it was beyond repair so I had to get a new one which took me sometime to select. I will be uploading at least 5 chapters this week.

Having obtained the core of the bud of Death flower Ivy, we left the Forest of Strange flowers to conclude the trial.

Since we managed to reach the main road safely, there is little worry

about being attacked by magical beasts anymore.

Now, all we have to do is walk the remaining distance to the town.

“It ended more smoothly than I expected. It’s a relief that we could leave the damp forest early,” I said.

“I think it ended smoothly thanks to Sachi-san’s magic,” Mil replied.

As we spoke, we walked toward the exit.

With plenty of time on our hands, we strolled leisurely while admiring the vast grasslands. Suddenly, Mil spoke to me as the words were carried by a gentle breeze.

“Um, thank you,” she said.

“Huh? What for?” I asked.

“For retrieving my embryonic seed,” she replied.

“Oh, you don’t need to worry about that. It was just to save the trouble of finding another one,” I said.

After all, it originally belonged to Mil. I just urged them to return it to its rightful owner. There was nothing special about it.

“I was happy that you retrieved it for me, but more than that, I was encouraged by seeing Sachi-san, who could strongly retort without fear of our class difference. You completely outwitted those nobles. So, um, what I mean is...” Mil stuttered, struggling to find the right words, and then expressed her emotions.

“It was really refreshing to watch!”

“Oh, you have a pretty good personality...” I said.

I never expected those words to come out of Mil's timid and cowardly mouth.

I see, she found it refreshing.

Well, they did say a lot of nasty things to her, so I can understand that feeling. I was a bit annoyed myself, which is why I did it.

However...

"Well, I think those guys obediently listened to what I said partly because of you, Mil," I said.

"....?" Mil tilted her head as if to say, "What do you mean?" So, I clenched my right fist and passionately declared.

"I think those guys returned the embryonic seed because they realized that Mil is truly amazing. When they witnessed such incredible ice magic right before their eyes, they couldn't simply dismiss it as just 'good luck,'" I explained passionately.

"I see... I'm not quite sure," Mil seemed a bit puzzled.

She didn't seem to fully grasp just how talented she was. Despite being capable of such impressive ice magic.

"Mil, you should have more confidence. With such incredible talent, you can confidently retort to anyone, no matter what they say. You can say, 'I'm stronger than all of you!' If you do that, those mean-spirited people won't bother you anymore," I encouraged her.

"Well... that sounds a bit difficult," Mil replied.

Well, considering Mil's timid nature, it would indeed be quite challenging for her to proudly showcase her talents. If she had shown

arrogance in displaying her abilities, those pampered noble kids would have avoided her from the start.

It might still be too harsh to expect a girl who cries endlessly over losing her pouch to suddenly become so bold.

But unexpectedly, Mil's determination seemed to ignite.

"However, you're right. From now on, I'll try my best, even if it's just a little. I may not have confidence in my own abilities yet, but I can believe in your words, Sachi-san," Mil expressed, showing surprising enthusiasm.

"Yeah, that's the spirit, that's the spirit," I encouraged her.

If she does that, she'll be able to feel refreshed through her own power from now on. And I'm sure similar things will happen once she enters this academy.

She should build up her confidence from now on, so she can stand up to those arrogant young nobles.

While exchanging such words, we eventually reached the eastern gate of the royal capital, Blossom.

This was the gathering place before the practical exam began.

There, a purple-haired female examiner was waiting, and as soon as she spotted us, she smiled with a mature expression.

"Welcome back. I'm glad you returned safely," the examiner greeted us.

I noticed that there was no one else around the examiner, and I started to suspect something.

“Oh, could it be that we were the first? Maybe we’re incredibly talented...”

“No, we’re the fourth and fifth. The candidates who finished the practical exam earlier have already left.”

“Ugh...”

What a disappointment. Since there was no one at the starting point of the exam, I thought for sure we were the fastest.

Well, it’s been over an hour since the exam started, which means we’ve already passed the halfway mark of the time limit. It’s strange that no one has returned yet.

Anyway, even being the fourth and fifth is an impressive result. With renewed enthusiasm, we report our exam to the examiner.

We confirm our exam tickets and names, then hand over the two embryo seeds we obtained.

“Two Death Flower Ivy seeds. I received them without a doubt. You two will receive extra points for the practical exam.

Please wait patiently until the announcement of the results in one week.”

“Yes.”

The results will be announced in one week. I was thinking of going back to Mulburry’s place if it took a little longer.

In that case, it seems better to stay in the capital city. Besides, if we reunite too soon, I might be seen as clingy. I can already envision a future where I’m treated like a child, with my head being patted.

“Also, I have to thank you.”

“Huh? Thank us?”

“I’m grateful that you defeated the blooming Death Flower Ivy. I never expected it to bloom at this timing.”

As the examiner bows her head, I involuntarily tilt my head in confusion.

How does she know about the incident in the forest? There should have been no one else besides me, Mil, and the privileged nobles in that place when we defeated the blooming Death Flower Ivy.

“Did you see it somewhere?”

“Not so much seeing, but we have surveillance eyes throughout the entire Enchanted Forest to prevent any misconduct during the exam. We can monitor the forest’s conditions from here, and if anything happens, nearby exam assistants will come to the scene.”

“Oh, I see. It’s that kind of magic.”

Remote surveillance magic, right? I think it’s called ‘Thousand-Mile Magic’ or something like that. Depending on the magic power level, you can monitor a certain range, and experts can even see the situation beyond a mountain.

Using that magic, they can monitor the Enchanted Forest during the exam and immediately inform nearby examiners if anything happens.

It’s a primitive but reliable method. Apparently, they were watching us, but it seems the exam assistants didn’t come...

“I found out that three male candidates were being attacked by the blooming Death Flower Ivy, and I was about to send the assistants right away. But before that, you two arrived and swiftly wiped them out. We couldn’t even intervene. You both possess incredible power.”

“Well, honestly, it was lucky that we managed to save those three safely.”

We were able to wipe them out quickly.

But I think it was just luck that we were able to rescue those three who were being attacked. They try to maintain fairness in the exam, so they avoid involving the assistants as much as possible. In that situation, having the assistants come would have ensured the safe rescue of the trio.

That’s why I couldn’t help but smile wryly, without getting conceited.

“Actually, I wanted to help the blue-haired girl who was being threatened by the trio as well, but they technically didn’t violate any rules. I was planning to give them a severe warning, but you surpassed me in that too. So, really, thank you for everything.”

“Oh no, it’s nothing...”

“I would have liked to give you both additional points for the practical exam, but unfortunately, I don’t have the authority. I apologize for that.”

“Well, if you did that, it would become unfair. It’s totally fine.”

Honestly, I did want it though. I want to get as close to passing as possible.

“It’s not just about fairness; I also believe that there’s no need for you two, who finished the practical exam so quickly, to receive additional points. It’s almost certain that you will pass.”

Hmm, I wonder.

It’s said that the Royal Harvest School of Magic places great emphasis

on the practical exam, but it doesn't mean that the results of the written exam are completely ignored. I have some confidence in it, but I unfortunately don't have a definite feeling of having secured my admission.

So, I'm a bit anxious. Maybe I should have tried to persuade them to give us additional points for the practical exam.

As I entertain such impure thoughts, I imagine Mulburry softly admonishing me in my mind, saying, "That's not right."

"Anyway, congratulations on completing the entrance exam. Take a good rest today and recover from the fatigue."

"Yes, ma'am."

As I raise my hand high to respond, the examiner gives me a quiet smile.

And with that, the exam is over.

So, let's head back to the inn, I think, and just as I'm about to start walking...

"Um....," Mil suddenly asked the examiner, and I belatedly remembered.

Come to think of it, that's right.

Why were the withered Ivy flowers in full bloom in that place?

It remains a mystery to this day.

"We still don't know the details. The national sorcerers were supposed to clean up the 'flower growth' before the exams began. The

possibility of overlooking them is low, and finding five of them in a frozen state was unexpected for us,” the examiner replied.

“...That’s true,” I agreed.

The examiner had mentioned it before the practical exam started. They had asked the national sorcerers to exterminate the dangerous withered Ivy flowers beforehand.

So why were there five survivors?

If it was just one, there might have been a possibility of overlooking it.

The mystery still remained unsolved, and the examiner wore a troubled expression.

“But...” she said.

“But?” I asked.

“One of the exam assistants claimed to have seen a ‘mysterious light’ in the forest during the practical exam. They said it was some kind of magical light, but it didn’t seem like something the candidates could have produced. We suspect that it might be the cause that attracted the ‘flower growth,’” I explained.

“A mysterious light of magic...” I pondered.

Could that be the reason why the withered Ivy flowers gathered five of them?

Besides, most of the ‘flower growth’ should have been eradicated, so they shouldn’t be present in this forest anymore.

In fact, if the examiner’s hypothesis is correct...

“Are you saying that there was a sorcerer who tried to sabotage the exam?” I asked.

“There’s a high possibility. Have you ever heard of an anti-magic organization called ‘Mistral’?” the examiner replied.

Mistral?

I glanced at Mil, and she tilted her head indicating that she had no knowledge of it either.

“Mistral is an independent group that has long been hostile to the magic nation of Orchard. They seem to hold dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, where magical talent is highly valued and sorcerers dominate the era.

Many of them bear an intense grudge against the national sorcerers, and they frequently meddle with the Magic Academy, the world’s largest institution for training sorcerers.”

“...What a nuisance,” I remarked.

It’s not uncommon for people to be dissatisfied with the magic supremacist sorcerer nation. Moreover, there are quite a few citizens who feel resentful about the enormous research funding granted to the national sorcerers, which comes from taxes paid to the magic nation.

It seems likely that there are national sorcerers who misuse research funds without achieving significant results.

So it’s not surprising that there are people who hold grudges against the national sorcerers...

But causing havoc during the entrance exam of the Magic Academy is clearly wrong in my opinion. Especially endangering us, mere candidates, for what purpose?

“While it’s highly likely that the culprits are them, there’s also a possibility that it could be the work of someone completely different. Anyway, if I find out anything, I will definitely inform you. It wouldn’t sit right to leave it unresolved like this,” the examiner said.

“Yes, thank you very much,” I replied.

Well, it’s not like we’ve already been accepted into the Magic Academy.

This might be the last time I get to talk to this examiner.

Anyway, even though I still feel unsatisfied, let’s be glad that the exam is over and leave it to the adults for now.

“I want to express my gratitude once again for preventing a major trouble this time. Both of you, well done on the entrance exam. I look forward to the day we meet again,” the examiner said.

“Thank you very much,” Mil and I said in unison, bidding farewell to the examiner.

And thus, my entrance exam for the Magic Academy came to a close.

I hope I can pass...!

Chapter 12

“Unexpected Invitation”

After the entrance exam ended,

I was walking down the town street with Mil.

The faint sunset peeked through the sky, dyeing it orange.

As I looked up at the evening glow, I stretched my back deeply.

“Hey... We’re done with the entrance exam.”

“Yes, indeed.”

Somehow, I felt nostalgic. Perhaps it was the relief from the tension of the exam.

Mil seemed to share the same feeling, with a soft smile that could crumble at any moment.

“I never thought I’d end up cooperating with someone for the exam.”

“Same here. Considering my unfortunate nature that brings misfortune to others, I thought I would be treated like a fragile object during this exam and wouldn’t be able to cooperate with anyone.”

As Mil spoke like that, a faint shadow crossed her face, showing signs of contemplation. However, she quickly returned to her previous smile.

Well, being plagued with misfortune like Mil must come with various worries. It wouldn't be strange for her to be treated delicately.

Above all, the entrance exam only happens once.

I heard there might be a second recruitment, but those who fail the first exam are generally ineligible to apply again.

They can try again next year, but a year can make a surprisingly big difference.

Especially for a magician.

With such an important exam, it's certain that all applicants are filled with a sense of determination.

So, it would have been unimaginable for them to cooperate with other examinees.

Although I did meet some unpleasant people, though.

"Sachi-san, you truly are blessed by luck. It's amazing that you've been with me all this time and haven't encountered misfortune. That's quite remarkable."

"What kind of compliment is that?"

I've never been complimented like that before.

While we were talking, we had already reached the central district of the royal capital.

The inn where I booked a room is just a left turn from this street we're walking on.

We reached the corner, and with a slightly reluctant feeling, I raised

my right hand.

“Well then, I’m going this way. Let’s meet again on the day of the results announcement, Mil.”

“Um, well...”

“...?”

I intended to bid farewell, but Mil opened her mouth as if she had something to say.

And for some reason, she pinched the edge of her hood with her fingertips, her gaze darting around.

Seems like she’s feeling embarrassed or something? That’s how it looks.

“What is it? What’s wrong?”

“N-No... It’s nothing after all.”

It didn’t seem like nothing.

Curious, I stared at Mil’s face with a puzzled look, and eventually she reluctantly revealed her thoughts.

“W-Well, I was thinking... how about having a meal together?”

“...”

Oh. I never expected Mil to invite me like that.

It’s not like I hadn’t considered the same thing. Since we had overcome the exam together, it would be nice to grab a meal casually.

But Mil seems to be a bit shy around people, and even though we took the exam together, I thought it would still be a barrier for us to go out for a meal just the two of us.

However, surprisingly, it wasn't such a big deal.

Mil, who invited me, must have gathered a lot of courage. Her pale cheeks reddened as she fidgeted.

Witnessing her like that, I involuntarily swallowed a gulp of air.

What is it? It's so endearing.

The timid, shy girl gathering her courage, even while feeling embarrassed, is it so alluring?

Mischievous feelings within me began to stir unknowingly.

Without realizing it, a mischievous smile appeared on my face.

"Hmm, why is that?"

"Huh!?"

"I'm just wondering why you want to have a meal with me."

I naturally smirked. It's not like I'm expecting any special reaction or anything.

I just felt a mischievous urge, wanting to tease her just a little. It often happened when I was with Mulburry-san. After all, Mulburry-san always gave such interesting reactions.

"Well, even if you ask me why... um, well, um...!"

Mil, who was asked the mischievous question, looked flustered and uneasy.

What an amusing and cute reaction.

But perhaps I was a little too mean.

“Hahaha, sorry, sorry. I just said something mischievous. Actually, I wanted the same thing, so let’s have a celebration together. Do you know any good restaurants?”

“Yes, I do! I found a delicious restaurant yesterday. How about going there?”

Mil seemed relieved and sighed in relief.

Since we’ve just become friendly, it’s better to avoid causing too much trouble for her.

Let’s keep it moderate.

In any case, with the proposal from Mil, I didn’t turn to the left street but continued walking down the street with her once again.

The restaurant Mil recommended was located in the central district of Blossom, the capital city.

It had a stylish atmosphere and was quiet and comfortable.

While the central district was known for its numerous entertainment facilities, the area around this restaurant seemed relatively calm.

On top of that, it was affordable. It was a great place.

And most importantly, the taste of the food was excellent, despite the

low prices.

“Phew, that was delicious. Thank you so much.”

“I’m glad it suited your taste.”

Mil and I finished all the dishes on the table and sipped our post-meal tea, enjoying a leisurely time while engaging in small talk.

“I still don’t know the results of the exam, but I’ll be staying in this town for a while longer. I think it would be good to find more hidden gem restaurants like this.”

“I may not know as much, but I’ll do my best to share what I know with you.”

We shared information about which shops were delicious and which ones were inexpensive and less crowded during lunchtime. As newcomers to the capital city, we exchanged knowledge.

During our conversation, I asked a question that had been on my mind.

“By the way, Mil, did someone teach you magic or anything like that?”

“Someone taught me? Well...”

“I had a sort of mentor. But you mentioned that your hometown was a rural area, so I wondered if you had the opportunity to learn magic.”

Ever since I heard about Mil’s birthplace, I had been curious. When and where did they learn magic?

“It’s true that I didn’t have the opportunity to learn magic from

anyone. Wealthy nobles can hire national magicians as private tutors from a young age, but our farming family couldn't afford such luxuries."

"So how did you learn magic then?"

Mil stated firmly, "I taught myself."

"Self-taught? You learned everything on your own?"

"Yes, I had study materials at home."

"Study materials? What kind of materials were they?"

"My father passed away from an illness before I can even remember, but my mother said he used to work as a magician," I explained.

"Oh, really? Was he a great magician?" Mil asked.

"He didn't have a national qualification or anything, but my mother said he independently crafted magical tools. He always dreamed of becoming an 'Artificer' since he was a child, so there were magic books and such at home as remnants of his studies..."

I see. So those became the study materials for learning magic. That makes sense in various ways. It explains why there were magic study materials in Mil's farmer family's home and why Mil has an extraordinary talent for magic.

It seems that while Mil's father wasn't a national magician, he had enough skill to independently create magical tools.

Perhaps that passionate involvement with magic was deeply ingrained in Mil's bloodline.

"But it's impressive that you were motivated to aim for becoming a

national magician through self-study. As for me, I'm not good at studying, so I often got scolded by my mentor for dozing off. I definitely wouldn't have been able to study on my own," I said.

"Haha, I can easily imagine that," Mil responded.

In response to that, I took a small paper napkin from the table, crumpled it, and flicked it with my finger, hitting Mil's forehead directly. Mil let out a faint "Ow!" and continued speaking while rubbing their forehead.

"I don't particularly enjoy theoretical studies either. But when I was young, I was delighted to be able to use magic, so I tirelessly tried every spell written in the magic books one by one. It was a remote countryside village, so there wasn't much else to do..."

She modestly spoke, but in reality, it would have been quite challenging to advance her studies to the point of attempting the entrance exam for a magic academy alone. Like her father, who was engrossed in creating magical tools, Mil must also have a deep love for magic.

I consider myself to have an above-average curiosity about magic, but studying alone would have been impossible for me.

"I might have a similar personality to my father, getting absorbed in something on my own. If I were to start making magical tools, I might become as engrossed in it as my father," Mil said.

"Magical tools, huh? I haven't used many magical tools myself, but what kind of magical tools did your father create?

Glasses that see through clothes or love potions that captivate the opposite sex?" I asked, jokingly.

Mil narrowed their eyes as if exasperated and cleared their throat before answering, "Individual crafting of magical tools was limited to creating small props. If he had become a national magician and had access to more research funds, he could have made bigger things.

Also, well...”

Suddenly, Mil reached into their collar and pulled out what appeared to be a chain.

“I heard from my mother that he often made pendants and various decorative items.”

“Wow! It’s beautiful! The blue gem at the tip is sparkling. Is this also a magical tool?”

“Yes. My mother said it’s a pendant that changes color according to the owner’s magical essence. It’s the last magical tool my father made before he passed away, and my mother gave it to me as a protective charm.”

The pendant that Mil wore faintly emitted a “blue light.”

So there are magical tools like this too. I’ve heard that magical tools are mostly helpful in daily life, but this one has a playful and lovely touch to it.

It changes color according to the magical essence. Did she say that?

“Then, Mil, is your magical essence ‘blue essence’? The ice magic you showed me during the practical exam was incredibly powerful...”

“Yes, that’s correct. I’m what you would call a ‘Blue Mage,’ so I excel in water-based magic.”

One more doubt that I had during the exam has been dispelled.

I see. Mil is a ‘Blue Mage’ with blue magical essence.

Magical essence varies in size, quantity, color, and character for each person.

Among them, the “color” indicates the adeptness in a particular type of magic, and by using magic that aligns with the color, one can unleash a stronger power.

Blue essence corresponds to water-based magic, red essence to fire-based magic, green essence to wind-based magic, and so on.

And depending on the color of the magical essence one possesses, the mage is referred to by a different name. So, Mil, who has blue magical essence, is called a Blue Mage.

It’s understandable that she was able to use such a powerful ice magic.

It’s probably also because her original magical power is high.

As I’m thinking how enviable it is, Mil suddenly looks at me and tilts her head.

“More importantly, I find your magic incredibly intriguing, Sachiko.”

“Huh? My magic?”

I wonder if I used some special magic and start to question, then suddenly realize. Ah, she must be talking about the instant death magic.

Chapter 13

“The blessings of the Lucky Girl.”

“Instant death magic, right? Does it work against any kind of magical beast?”

Receiving such a question, I suddenly recalled it.

When I first showed the instant death magic, it was during the entrance exam, so I didn’t go into much detail. It’s incomprehensible without an explanation, that kind of magic. It’s already a rare kind of magic, like a trick.

“It probably works against any kind of magical beast, I think. It can probably kill anything living in a single blow, like wild animals or humans. Of course, I’ve never tried it myself.”

“In a single blow...”

Mil looked clearly astonished and dumbfounded.

I realized it myself after saying it, but it’s quite an amazing magic, isn’t it? Being able to kill anything living in a single blow, it’s the ideal magic for magic users whose livelihood is monster hunting. It seemed Mil shared the same thought.

“Isn’t that an incredible magic? Why isn’t anyone using it?”

“Because its success rate depends on luck rather than magical power. And even with a slightly high luck value, it becomes a meaningless magic. If it only succeeds once every Milion attempts, no one would think of using it in actual combat.”

Indeed, Mulburry-san had never succeeded in using the instant death magic no matter how many times she tried.

Similarly, there were no records of success with other probability-based magic, making them seem completely pointless.

“If Sachi uses it, does the instant death magic become a surefire hit?”

“Yeah, a surefire hit. There are other magic spells that rely on luck, but I don’t think any of them have ever failed. Well, it’s probably because of having a ‘luck value of 999’.”

“H-Hold on, a luck value of 999!?”

After revealing the luck value again, Mil shouted in astonishment, causing the gazes of the surrounding customers to shift slightly towards us. However, Mil didn’t have the composure to be concerned about that and stood frozen, her mouth hanging open.

Is it really that surprising? Maybe not as a magician, but the power I possess has a luck value of 999. Although it’s considered meaningless for magicians.

But it seemed that Mil’s shock wasn’t about me being a magician, but rather from the perspective of an unlucky girl.

“A...a... Please shake hands with me!”

“Huh?”

“Because of my luck value of 0, I’ve had various unfortunate experiences until now. I’ve tried purification rituals and lucky charms, but none of them worked, and my luck never improved. But somehow, I feel like I can become lucky if I touch you, Sachi-san!”

Is she treating me like a lucky charm? I don’t want to be included in the category of lucky charms without my consent.

And now that I look closely, Mil's wrist is adorned with prayer beads and bracelets. She probably carries other items to boost her luck as well. When someone becomes as unlucky as her, perhaps they can only rely on divine intervention to solve their problems. I never imagined she was a fan of lucky charms...

Seeing Mil desperately begging for a handshake, I couldn't help but smile wryly.

"Well... I don't want Mil's misfortune to rub off on me."

"Don't say it like I'm a contagious bacteria! Please, I'm begging you, Sachi-san! Please make me happy!"

"Uh, if you say it like that, it sounds different. Don't shout while holding both hands out."

Other customers are starting to glance over here!

After a while, Mil calms down, mutters "I'm sorry," and straightens up.

She's such a noisy little Red Riding Hood.

Then, Mil slumps her shoulders heavily and lets out a faint sigh.

"But hearing that you have a luck value of 999 made me understand. Thanks to that, you can reliably succeed with the instant death magic... It's just that I'm starting to lose a bit of confidence in myself."

"Huh? Why?"

"Why? Because having a magician who can defeat any magical beast with a single blow in front of you, wouldn't anyone lose confidence?"

Hmm, is that how it works? I don't really understand because I've never been in their position. But even though Mil can use such

incredible magic, she shouldn't get so discouraged just because she asked about the instant death magic.

"As someone with a magical power value of 1, I envy ordinary magicians who can freely use various types of magic. It's true that being able to reliably succeed with probability-based magic is powerful, but it's still inconvenient in many ways.

Moreover, it's highly questionable whether this power alone can make me a national magician."

"It's more than enough talent, I think..."

"You may say that, but I think it's precarious whether I can become a National Mage with this power."

"While I may have overwhelming power in combat against magical beasts, being a National Mage requires other abilities as well."

"I think Mil, who can handle a wide variety of magic with above-average power, has the potential for that."

"Well, I'm an unlucky girl with a luck value of 0, though."

"Anyway, for now, all we can do is pray for the entrance exam results and wait. I hope both of us can pass the entrance exam. If my luck value does its job, maybe..."

"Huh, does luck value have an effect on things like this too?"

"Well, I just said it casually."

"But if luck value does affect acceptance or rejection, then it would mean only you pass while I fail."

"Ultimately, the exam is all about scores, so I don't think luck value will make a difference. Probably... I think."

With a few more casual conversations like that, we concluded our post-exam gathering.

A week has passed since the exam day.

Today is the day of the announcement for the entrance exam results at the Royal Harvest Magic Academy.

Nervously, I welcomed the morning and left my dorm room with determination.

I had made a promise with Mil to go see the results together.

So first, I decided to head to the central district for our meeting.

I've heard that it's better to go alone in times like this rather than with acquaintances. It would be awkward if one of us passed while the other didn't.

But we didn't care about that and agreed to meet at the fountain square in the central district.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Mil!"

"Good morning, Sachi-san."

When I arrived at the fountain square, Mil was already waiting.

She seemed a bit tense, just like me, and appeared a little stiff.

To dispel such timid thoughts from both of us, I raised my voice energetically.

“Alright, it’s the long-awaited day of the acceptance announcement. Let’s both pass together!”

“Yes!”

Mil also joined in and our loud voices echoed in the fountain square in the early morning.

And so, the two of us headed from the fountain square in the central district towards the public district’s Magic Academy.

As we walked along the streets, we saw several people who seemed like exam takers, their faces equally tense.

If we go and check, we’ll find out our acceptance or rejection. Whether we can pass through the school gate as new students of the Magic Academy in a few weeks.

Thinking that, my footsteps naturally became heavier.

But if we don’t go and check, nothing will start. With that determination, I stepped into the Magic Academy.

“...That bulletin board.”

When I arrived at the academy, many exam takers had already gathered in the plaza in front of the entrance.

And in the center of the plaza stood a giant bulletin board.

It seemed like the results hadn’t been announced yet, as there was nothing posted on the board.

But just then, four male teachers came out of the school building and walked towards the bulletin board.

They were carrying large cylindrical papers together.

Presumably, the exam numbers of the successful candidates were written on those papers.

The teachers broke through the crowd of exam takers and stood in front of the bulletin board, quickly unfolding the papers and posting them.

The exam takers simultaneously glanced at the papers.

“315... 315...”

Like everyone else, I frantically scanned the bulletin board for my own exam number, ‘315’.

Now, Luck Value 999, please bring me a bright future!

306

308

311

312

315

“...There it is.”

My heart skipped a beat. For a moment, the surrounding noise seemed to fade away.

When my eyes caught sight of my desired number, my chest pounded as if a small explosion had occurred inside me.

“All right... All right... All right!”

I passed.

I passed the entrance exam for the Magic Academy.

I wasn't lacking in confidence, but when the moment of truth arrived, I couldn't help feeling anxious.

But I made it through. Just as expected of an lucky girl like me!

And as soon as I realized I had passed, I immediately turned my gaze to the person next to me.

How about Mil?

“Ah, ahh...”

“...Mil?”

Mil was trembling, both in her body and voice.

Her gaze was fixed straight on the exam results posted on the bulletin board, her mouth agape in astonishment.

Eventually, Mil noticed my gaze and slowly turned to face me, nodding.

“There it is, Sachi-san.”

“Huh, really!?”

“‘117,’ it's written right here. I passed...!”

To confirm, I also searched for the number ‘117,’ and indeed, it was written on the paper as the number for successful applicants.

I couldn't help but shout in excitement and tightly embrace Mile.

And then, both of us shed tears of joy and spun around in that spot for a while.

Both of us passed.

Now we can attend the Magic Academy together.

We were able to take a step towards becoming National Sorcerers together.

“We did it! We did it!”

“Yes! Yes!”

Mulburry-san, I did it.

I got accepted into the Magic Academy.

I will definitely become a National Sorcerer and free the people from the Forest of Atonement.

From now on, my life at the Magic Academy begins.

Chapter 13

“Entrance Ceremony”

Days have passed since the announcement of the results, and it's now the day of the entrance ceremony. Clad in a brand new uniform provided by the academy, I marched off to the ceremony. Today, I officially become a student of the Royal Harvest Academy of Magical Arts, embarking on the path to become a certified national mage.

To commemorate this fresh start, the training grounds of the academy were adorned with elaborate decorations, indicating a great deal of enthusiasm. New students who had passed the entrance exams were flocking into the venue, and I decided to follow suit.

It seems that there are no second or third-year students present for the entrance ceremony. I wonder if they don't attend these events? Also, there are quite a few teachers here. I suppose each teacher is assigned to a specific field of study, and we have different teachers for each subject?

Lost in various thoughts and restlessness, I suddenly realized that the entrance ceremony had concluded. Honestly, I don't remember much about the proceedings.

“Phew, it's finally over...”

For now, my impression is that it was quite boring. I vaguely recall the headmaster or someone similar speaking about academy events and such. And there was also a female student who seemed like the student council president, right?

Was she in her third year, perhaps?

Setting that aside, I must gather my determination from now on. It's

time for class assignments.

I hope I can be in the same class as Mil. Well, with a total of six classes, it might not go as smoothly as I'd like, though.

"Oh, I'm in Class A."

"Ah, me too."

The results were surprisingly straightforward. I'm in Class A, just as I had hoped. Mil is also in Class A. It's unfolding exactly as I wished.

After the entrance ceremony, as we returned from the training grounds to the main building, students would pass through the academy's entrance where a massive bulletin board displayed the class assignments. I quickly found my name on the list.

"I'm glad I have someone I know in my class. Let's get along from now on."

"Yes, I feel the same way. Nice to meet you."

I felt like it was going to be an enjoyable school life. And when I entered the classroom, to my surprise, I found myself assigned to the backseat by the window. And next to me was Mil.

It couldn't have been a more perfect arrangement.

I couldn't help but think that I was being showered with an abundance of divine favor. And as if to further illuminate this series of good fortune...

"I'll be in charge of Class A this year. It's been a while since I saw the students from the preliminary entrance exam," said Miss. Lezan Herve, our homeroom teacher.

“...You’re the examiner from back then,” I thought.

The person who became our homeroom teacher was the same examiner who helped us during the exam. Knowing that I had someone familiar again, I felt even more at ease. We only had a brief conversation, but the examiner seemed very kind-hearted. I’m sure they’ll be a great teacher.

As I leisurely listened to Ms. Lezan’s explanation from my seat at the back by the window, I suddenly heard whispers from around me.

“Hey, look at those two by the window.”

“They don’t have family crests. Could they be commoners?”

“Why are they even in a magic academy?”

Such words could be heard here and there. My classmates seemed overly concerned about me and Mil. I guess it’s unusual to be commoners here?

Well, that makes sense. It’s quite out of place for mere commoners, who are said to lack magical talent, to be in the world’s finest mage training institution. Moreover, when I checked around during the entrance ceremony, everyone except Mil and me had a “family crest” pinned to their uniform.

This magic academy is overflowing with nobles. In the midst of that, it must be quite conspicuous for Mil and me, plain commoners without any family crests.

But, is one’s background really that important? Is it so crucial to one’s school life?

I was born into a prestigious family of mages, but I have no desire whatsoever to reclaim that name now.

Come to think of it, those spoiled noble kids who bothered us during the exam weren't present at the entrance ceremony. They probably failed.

"Now, let's move on to the explanation about the student dormitories. You should already know this, but the three-story building right next to the academy is our main student dormitory. You'll be assigned roommates and live together in pairs, so I hope you'll foster good relationships," Ms. Lezan continued.

As I listened to that explanation, it suddenly came to my mind. Right next to the academy, there were two beautifully designed buildings with a predominantly white color. It seemed to be a considerably large facility, and I vaguely recall them mentioning it during the orientation, but I don't remember much.

"We have already made the room assignments beforehand. Generally, you'll be sharing a room with classmates from the same class. I'll post the details on the board in front, so please check it later," Ms. Lezan concluded.

After that, we went through self-introductions with our classmates, and the day ended early.

And now, it was evening.

The dormitories of the Royal Harvest Academy of Magical Arts were arranged side by side, with the boys' dormitory closer to the academy and the girls' dormitory further inside. Naturally, unless there was a specific reason, entry into the opposite gender's dormitory was prohibited. So, I would never have the chance to peek into the boys' dormitory.

With such thoughts in mind, I crossed in front of the boys' dormitory and headed towards the girls' dormitory. Upon entering the dormitory, I started walking along the first-floor corridor to reach my assigned room.

The student dormitory was a three-story building, with the first floor

for first-year students, the second floor for second-year students, and the third floor for third-year students. Each floor had its own cafeteria and large communal bath, so there were hardly any opportunities to interact with students from other years within the dormitory.

As expected, the roommate I would interact with the most

“I’m Sachiko. Nice to meet you from today. Um, may I ask for your name?”

“...Um, why are you saying that now?”

My roommate gave me a clear look of exasperation.

Did I do something strange? I thought I just greeted them normally.

...Well, I’ll drop the act here.

“I already know your name and face very well, so why do we need introductions now?”

“Well, I thought that when you become roommates with someone you’ve never met before, you would greet them like this. The first impression is important, you know. Anyway, nice to meet you again, Mil.”

“Yes, nice to meet you too.”

My roommate, Mireille Glass-chan, nodded in agreement.

We were in the same class, sat close to each other, and now we ended up sharing a dorm room. It seemed too intentional to be a coincidence.

I had hoped for this to happen, but I never thought my wish would actually come true.

Well, rather than intentional, it's more like...

"Talk about lucky. I never expected us to end up sharing a room in the student dorms."

"Does luck really have anything to do with this?"

"Hmm, probably?"

People with high luck tend to experience good things in their daily lives. They find money on the street more often, have fewer accidents or injuries, or are unusually good at gambling.

So I believe that luck played a role in our class and room assignments as well.

After all, my luck stat is at its maximum value of 999.

If this had nothing to do with luck, it would be more unnatural. You can't underestimate luck. Those who have luck on their side are the strongest in this world!

"If this happened thanks to Sachiko's luck, does that mean you've covered up my luck stat of 0?"

"Huh, why?"

"Because I'm also very happy right now."

"...I see."

Caught off guard by her sudden smile, my cheeks grew warm.

Damn it, she said something nice. It makes me happy.

If luck played a role in our class and room assignments, then Mill should have undoubtedly ended up in an unlucky situation.

But the fact that she's now so happy means that my luck has consumed her misfortune. I can't assert it without any evidence, though.

"Well, regardless, there's no denying that this is a convenient turn of events for me. My roommate is Mil, the room is nice, and our homeroom teacher is that examiner too. Everything seems to be off to a good start. Although, I do feel some curious gazes from the people around."

"Oh, well, commoners are quite rare here, you know. And I heard that it's been about five years since a non-noble commoner enrolled in the magic academy."

Oh, I see.

That explains why we're attracting attention.

So, in this magic academy, besides the second and third years, Mill and I are the only commoners. It's quite impressive that everyone else comes from well-known families.

It seems that magical talent is most influenced by bloodline after all.

Then why is my magical power so weak?

Even though I'm supposed to be the daughter of the prestigious Gracier family, known for their magicians.

While silently lamenting my own talent, I raise my spirits as I enter the sight of the dorm room. I toss my belongings aside and run around the room with excitement.

And as I notice the giant beds placed on both sides of the room, I

shout, “Woohoo!” and dive into one of them.

It’s so incredibly soft! The comfort level is amazing! Jackets and socks are just in the way!

“Poof!”

“Hey, Sachiko! Don’t just toss your clothes around like that!”

Nonchalantly taking off my jacket and socks, Mill scolds me with an exasperated tone.

She picks them up and hangs the jacket on a hanger, while neatly folding the socks.

As I watch her doing so while lying on the bed, a thought crosses my mind.

“By any chance, Mill, are you someone who gets bothered if your socks are different for each foot, or if the door is left wide open, or if clothes are inside out in the laundry basket?”

“Well, doesn’t that bother everyone?”

Hmm...

It seems that Mill and I have slightly different values.

Or rather, it might become a crack in our relationship, living together or sharing a room like this. Realizing this, Mill gives me a skeptical look.

“On that note, may I ask you a question too, Sachiko? Are you perhaps an easygoing person?”

“Well, how rude. Even though I’m quite organized. I was actually

praised by my former master for being a genius at throwing socks into the laundry basket perfectly from the entrance of my house.”

“...I think I get the idea now.”

While narrowing her eyes in further exasperation, Mill starts collecting the items I threw around. Then she checks the storage in the room and begins tidying up my belongings.

“Clothes and accessories will go on this shelf. Small consumables will be stored in the adjacent compartment. Please remember where everything goes.”

“Yes, got it.”

“This feeling is nostalgic, isn’t it?

I remember being scolded by Mrs. Mulberry a lot when I lived in the forest house.

Hmm, so in the House of Penitents, it’s like Mrs. Mulberry was my mother...

“In this dorm room, does that mean Mill is my mother?”

“Who’s your mother?”

Mil gave me a stern look at that moment...

Suddenly, the sound of a bell echoed through the dormitory corridor.

Ding, ding, ding, three times. I quickly sat up in bed, realizing that it was the signal for dinner.

“Oh, isn’t it dinner time? Come to think of it, I’m starving. Let’s go!”

“Just wait, Sachiko-san! We should tidy up the room first...”

“I’ll do it later.”

Rushing out of the dorm room, I was followed by Mil, who hurried to catch up with me.

As we followed our hunger and hurried to the dining hall, a delightful aroma wafted through the hallway.

The dormitory residents had already gathered, holding their dinners and taking their seats. We quickly prepared to eat as well.

That evening’s dinner consisted of soft, fragrant bread and a hearty stew.

After dinner, it was time for bathing.

The large bath was divided into time slots for each class, and Class A was the first on the schedule.

Once we finished bathing, there was a short period of free time before bedtime.

During that free time, I ended up making a mess in the room again, and Mil reluctantly cleaned it up for me.

“Having the same roommates might have been unfortunate...”

“Oh, come on, don’t say that. Let’s get along from now on, Mil, my mother.”

“Who’s your mother, I said!”

And so, our enjoyable cohabitation in the dormitory began from that

day onward.

The next day arrived.

Today marks the beginning of the official classes at the Magic Academy.

We're supposed to start with a review of the basics of magic.

However, I heard that we will quickly transition to practical classes starting from the second semester, so we can't afford to be complacent.

Since the incoming students have already overcome the challenging entrance exams, it's assumed that we already possess the fundamental knowledge.

Indeed, everything we did on the first day of class was simply a recap of what Mrs. Mulberry had taught us earlier.

Well, it's understandable for the first day.

I've heard that the Magic Academy places a lot of emphasis on practical achievements, so the real challenges will probably start appearing soon.

For now, it might be best to focus on getting accustomed to campus life.

With that in mind, I tried to strike up a conversation with the people around me to fit in with the class. However, I lacked the courage, and before I knew it, the last class of the day had ended.

I'm such a pushover...

“Now, with that, we conclude the first day of classes. But before we finish, there’s something very important I want to tell all of you.”

As Professor Lezan spoke with a slightly more serious tone, the classroom fell into silence.

Everyone listened attentively, wondering what it could be.

“At the Royal Harvest Magic Academy, we receive numerous requests for slaying magical beasts. These requests are known as ‘Academy Quests.’ By accepting and completing these quests, students receive ‘Slaying Points,’ which are added to their grades.”

“Academy Quests?”

While I had no recollection of this, the people around me seemed to understand and nodded in agreement.

Perhaps it’s a well-known concept among those who are familiar with the Magic Academy?

So, Academy Quests are the tasks given to students to slay magical beasts, which are typically handled by national sorcerers?

If it’s training in preparation for becoming a national sorcerer and slaying magical beasts in the future, it certainly makes sense.

“Even the national sorcerers you aspire to become participate in quests and slay magical beasts. Just like them, we want you to defeat dangerous magical beasts for the sake of public safety. Furthermore, completing these quests comes with rewards, so I urge you to give it your best effort.”

With Professor Lezan’s explanation, the class became slightly more lively.

Rewards. Indeed, that’s something to get excited about.

While those around me may not be in need of money, coming from noble families, the prospect of earning their own money must be invigorating since they likely have little experience with it. After all, it means being able to perform tasks similar to those of a national sorcerer.

“While rewards are certainly important, I want you to remember that achieving high grades is even more significant.

‘Academic Points’ gained through written exams and research presentations are also crucial for your grades, but here at the Magic Academy, ‘Slaying Points’ achieved through quest completion are particularly emphasized.”

Slaying Points. It’s been mentioned a few times already.

Completing these Academy Quests apparently allows you to earn them, but are they really that important?

As I nodded in response to my own question, Professor Lezan delivered a shocking revelation.

“Those who do not meet a certain level of achievement will not be able to take the task exams or advance to the next grade and will face ‘expulsion.’ Be mindful of the target points for both Slaying Points and Academic Points. Therefore, I hope you all strive to complete as many Academy Quests as possible during your free time and holidays, and successfully advance to your second year.”

Silence fell upon the class that had been buzzing moments ago.

It’s no wonder. We’ve just heard such a serious term as “expulsion” on the very first day of class.

Those who fail to achieve the required level and cannot take the task exams or advance will be immediately expelled.

Of course, failing the exams is also out of the question.

That's the meritocratic education system of the world's most prestigious Magic Academy for you.

Suddenly, a sense of tension overwhelmed me.

"Starting today, the reception for first-year student quests should be open, so I suggest you visit it after school. It's located in the central corridor on the first floor."

With that, Professor Lezan concluded his explanation, and it was time for the pre-departure cleaning period.

As everyone prepared for it, I whispered secretly to Mil, who sat next to me.

"Let's go check out the quest reception after school."

"Yes, understood."

Mil and I decided to visit the quest reception after school.

Chapter 15

“Drawbacks of being a commoner”

“Wow, so many individuals...”

Many students had gathered at the reception desk.

They were probably all new students.

Everyone seemed restless, waiting for their turn.

Well, if they were told that failure to achieve the required grades would result in immediate expulsion, anyone would be anxious.

But if I keep spacing out like this, someone might snatch away all the assignments.

“We’re going too, Mil!”

“Yes...”

To avoid the cruel fate of immediate expulsion, Mil and I lined up in one of the queues at the reception desk.

It seemed that at the reception desk, the receptionist would introduce the assignments. They would present several options, and we would choose from among them.

I could see that by observing the students near the front of the line.

The students would select a favored assignment from the options

presented, and one by one, they would leave the school building to embark on their missions.

“I wonder what kind of assignments they’ll introduce. Even though they’re called extermination requests, we’re still students, so they shouldn’t be too difficult, right?”

“But the National Sorcerers who accept these extermination requests are said to receive the same content,” Mil replied.

“Well, I guess we won’t know until we actually see it.”

As Mil and I chatted, our turn eventually arrived.

There were five counters at the reception desk, and to our surprise, a girl around ten years old stood at ours.

With neatly arranged short black hair and round, innocent eyes, she seemed even younger than us.

She was probably the receptionist.

She appeared younger than us in any case.

She couldn’t be a student here, right? It was even less likely that she was a teacher.

Why would a girl like her be working as a receptionist?

Perhaps they hired her from elsewhere? Well, that didn’t matter...

“Um, excuse me. We’d like to accept an extermination request.”

“Yes, certainly,” the young receptionist replied.

She showed us an innocent smile and responded formally.

And surprisingly, she performed her duties flawlessly, with actions beyond her apparent age. Confirming our names, class, student ID, and preparing the documents necessary for accepting the request, she swiftly completed everything in no time.

Then, with her round eyes, she looked at both me and Mil simultaneously.

“Are the two of you accepting the request together?”

“Yes, that’s correct, but...”

“In that case...”

The receptionist looked at us intently before approaching the bulletin board at the back of the counter. Numerous sheets of paper were posted there, and the girl peeled off two of them and brought them over to us. It turned out to be sheets with the details of the requests written on them.

“Here are the extermination request forms. Currently, these are the requests I can introduce to Lady Sachi and Lady Mil,” she said.

“Oh, I see...”

So these are the request forms. Indeed, the other receptionists were also pulling off papers from that bulletin board.

They would show them to the students who came to the reception desk and explain the extermination requests. But...

“Wait a minute. Does this mean that these two papers are the only extermination requests we can be introduced to?” I asked.

“Yes, these are the requests that can be introduced at the moment,”

the girl replied, sounding slightly apologetic.

I glanced briefly at the neighboring counter and furrowed my brow deeply.

“The other students seem to be getting introduced to ten or fifteen requests, various ones... Why are we only given these two?”

“The purpose of the reception desk is to introduce appropriate requests to the students. If you want to be introduced to a larger number of requests, you need to achieve corresponding achievements,” she explained.

“Achievements...” I muttered.

We’ve just enrolled, so we don’t have any achievements. What is this short-haired reception girl talking about? We haven’t even done any major assignments or exams. But more importantly...

“But everyone else doesn’t have achievements either, right? So why do we have so few requests introduced to us?”

We’re in the same grade...”

As I was about to say that, I couldn’t help but stop myself. “Same” grade? No, that’s not right. There’s one clear difference between us and the other first-year students.

“Could it be... the ‘family crest’?”

“Well, yes... that’s correct,” she confirmed.

My bad premonition turned out to be true. Oh no, seriously? I clenched my teeth inwardly. Mil, who had been observing the exchange, asked with a puzzled expression.

“W-What does that mean?”

“It’s similar to the entrance exam. The other new students, unlike us, have ‘badges’ attached to the chest of their uniforms. The so-called ‘family crests’ mentioned by those rich kids from noble families.”

“Oh...”

At that moment, Mil also seemed to have noticed.

The difference between us and the other students.

Why is it that only we receive extremely few introduction requests?

“It’s really difficult to assess the abilities of new students with no achievements or track record. So for now, they’re probably referring to us for extermination requests based on the family crest we wear on our chests, depending on our background, right?”

“...Well, in a way, if a student fails a request, it would also be our responsibility as receptionists.”

The straight-haired reception girl nodded with a deeply apologetic expression.

The request reception area is a place where suitable requests are assigned to students. If an inappropriate request is assigned and the student fails to complete it, it would inconvenience the ordinary citizens who brought in the request.

Even though they are referred to as school requests, these are proper requests. They come with rewards and are treated as formal jobs. It is crucial for the reputation of the Magic Academy that these important requests are not entrusted to unsuitable individuals.

Therefore, they judge the requests based on the family crest worn on their chests, determining which noble family they come from before making the assignment.

I don't know the details, but apparently, each family crest has its own unique colors and shapes, and it may even indicate their title.

I should also be born into a noble family, but I was never told anything about that.

Anyway, it's clear now.

"...So, are you saying that commoners like me and Sachiko are not trustworthy?"

"Well, compared to a mere commoner whose background is unknown, a newly enrolled student born into a reputable noble family with proven achievements is definitely more trustworthy. After all, bloodline is directly connected to magical talent. As a receptionist, you wouldn't want to entrust a request to someone who might fail and cause trouble."

I don't know the specific penalties involved, but the receptionist must face some sort of disadvantage as well. The receptionist explained, adding with a hint of concern.

"If you were taking requests alongside other nobles, we could provide more assignments, but without both of you having family crests, the judgment criteria become scarce..."

"No, please don't worry about it. It means that you are doing your job properly."

I can't blame the receptionist forcibly. After all, if the assigned requests fail, it's the receptionist who will be scolded.

It's only natural for the receptionist to be cautious and have a narrower range of assignments. In fact, we, commoners who are said to lack magical talent, should be grateful that the receptionist brought us two request forms.

Well, the line behind us is starting to get quite long.

I should stop talking further and causing more inconvenience to the receptionist.

“Then, please let us take this request for now.”

“Yes, understood.”

When I chose one of the two request forms, the reception girl swiftly processed it.

“I never thought I would be troubled by social status even after enrolling.”

“...Yes.”

As we left the request reception area, we sat on a bench in the courtyard and let out a sigh of disappointment together.

We were currently taking a short break while also confirming the contents of the request forms.

However, the new students who seemed to have received favorable requests were crossing our path one after another, happily. Our hearts couldn't find any peace.

At this rate, the gap between us and the pampered nobles will keep widening.

I never expected the drawbacks of falling into the commoner category to manifest in a place like this.

Still, I don't really want to reveal my family name at this point.

“We received these requests as a form of sympathy, but it’s not like we can keep accepting just these.”

“If the extermination points don’t reach the target value, we’ll be expelled immediately.”

The request that the straight-haired receptionist introduced to us was the “Extermination of Crows in Smoky Rock Mountain.”

The target number of exterminations was “twenty,” the reward amount was “500 ruets,” and the extermination points were “1.”

The difficulty level was marked as “F.”

I don’t know the criteria used to determine the difficulty level, but for now, I understand that this is the lowest difficulty request.

But even with the lowest difficulty, we can earn 500 ruets. It’s quite a lucrative deal.

“It says the extermination points are 1, but what happens if two people take the request?”

“Well, just a moment.”

When I asked a simple question, Mil immediately took out her student ID from her pocket. The student ID of the Magic Academy includes information about the school rules, academy-related matters, and even the school requests.

When there’s something you don’t understand about the academy, opening it will generally provide some answers.

“If multiple people take the request, it seems the extermination points will be divided. However, it won’t be added as a decimal point, so in this case, it seems one of us will receive an additional point. It’s

common to discuss and decide among yourselves.”

“I see.”

Taking a request with multiple people increases the chances of success.

But in return, the extermination points are divided.

It seems that the rewards are not affected, but it probably means that they should be distributed among the participants.

Still, only one point for extermination...?

“How many points do we need to earn by the end of the semester?”

“I think... it was ‘100’ points.”

“What?!”

An unintentional sigh escaped my lips.

100 points. It’s an astronomical number.

From today until the end-of-term exam, there are about ninety days.

Even if we complete a request like today’s, which gives only ‘1 point,’ every day, we still won’t reach the target value.

Moreover, it’s doubtful if we can even achieve a single extermination request after school.

We can’t assume that convenient requests will always come our way as commoners, and there will surely be days when we won’t be able to

accept any requests at all.

So how are we supposed to earn 100 points?

“...This is bad.”

What should we do?

Chapter 16

Body Enhancement Magic.

For now, I decided to settle the subjugation request I received together with Mil.

We left the academy and, once again, confirmed the details of the request in front of the school gate.

“It’s a ‘Subjugation of Shuka, the Crow of Smoky Rock Mountain.’ What kind of magical beast is this Shuka?”

“It’s a black bird magical beast. It has horns as a characteristic, and while it’s not highly aggressive, it has a habit of swiftly snatching away items humans possess.”

“I see...”

Certainly, we have to subjugate it. However, it seems that it won’t be a very challenging request since its aggression isn’t that high.

By the way, the reward amount on the request form was ‘500 Ruts,’ and the difficulty level was listed as ‘F.’ F is probably the lowest difficulty, so we don’t have to be too tense. It should be alright.

“So, where is Smoky Rock Mountain? I have no idea about this area.”

“If I remember correctly, it’s the mountain visible on the northeast side of the capital.”

I followed Mil’s pointing gaze and indeed saw a large shadow of a mountain in the distance.

I can't see the details from here, but it's probably covered in rough rocky terrain.

And is there something smoky? A white smoke seems to be covering the mountain like clothing.

"There are numerous small holes in the ground of the mountain, from which smoke regularly erupts. That smoke covering the mountain is said to be the cause."

"I see, so that's why it's called 'Smoky Rock Mountain.'"

Understanding the origin of the name again, I let out an impressed voice.

"The smoke emitted by the mountain is usually harmless white smoke, but occasionally colored smoke comes out, which seems to be toxic. Please be careful."

"So, white smoke is fine, but anything other than that should be avoided, right?"

Toxic, huh?

I don't know the specific symptoms it causes, but for now, I'll pay close attention to the smoke with colors. Well, even if I get poisoned, I can treat it with magic.

"By the way, we're going to that mountain now, right?"

"Huh? Well, yes. That's the nature of the request. Is there something wrong with that?"

"I mean, if we just walk there normally, we'll definitely end up returning in the middle of the night."

As I gazed at Smoky Rock Mountain in the distance, I muttered.

Mil, who also looked towards the mountain, let out a voice of understanding, saying, “Ah.”

Because you could tell just by looking. It’s ridiculously far from here to that mountain.

Even if we use a carriage for the round trip, it would take at least three hours just for the travel time, right?

It seems we have to pass through a dense forest on the way to the mountain, and we can’t avoid fighting the magical beasts either.

Depending on the progress of the request, there’s a possibility that we might end up staying until the next morning.

How should we bridge this distance?

“Do you have a flying magic carpet or something?”

“Don’t expect something out of this world all of a sudden.”

Mil narrowed her jade-like eyes with an exasperated expression.

Well, I heard that Mil’s father was an artisan of magical tools.

I thought he might have one or two useful gadgets.

Mil’s father apparently independently crafted tools and making a small gadget was the best he could do, but it wouldn’t be surprising if he accidentally created something extraordinary.

“There’s no helping it then. Let’s use magic to travel. We should avoid consuming magical energy before the battle with the magical beasts,

but given the circumstances...”

“Yeah, well, that’s probably how it goes. It seems like everyone else uses magic to travel. After all, it’s impossible to complete a subjugation request in the short time after school hours.”

It appears that everyone covers the time constraint with magic.

If that’s the case, then we have no choice but to do the same.

High-speed travel using magic.

Most of them use the “Body Enhancement Magic” technique called [Limit Break of Superhuman Experience] to increase their leg strength and endurance, enabling physical high-speed movement.

There don’t seem to be any first-year students using spatial transportation magic.

The teleportation magic [Interstellar Crossing Between Stars] can only go to places they have visited before, and the farther they want to go, the more intense the magical energy consumption becomes.

Moreover, if one has a low magic power value, they can’t travel very far at all.

Becoming able to freely move using teleportation magic will probably be a story for a little further down the line.

Mulberry-san frequently moved swiftly through the forest using teleportation magic, but apparently, that was quite an impressive feat.

In a way, I can do something similar, but then I would have to leave Mil behind.

So, like other students, I decided to use body enhancement magic.

“Oh, but what about Sachi?”

“Huh? What about me?”

“You mentioned having a magic power value of 1, right? With that, you can’t use ‘Body Enhancement Magic’ or

‘Teleportation Magic’...”

Mil, who already knew my magical power level, looked at me with a worried expression.

In response to her, I proudly declared, “I can use body enhancement magic, you know.”

“Huh?”

“It’s true, really. It’s a bit different from what other people use, but watch closely.”

As soon as I said that, I began to chant.

“【The time of awakening has come—Inner monstrous strength—Become the key that pierces through adversity】”

This was the body enhancement magic granted only to me...

“【Foolhardy Might of the Inferno】”

At the moment of activation, my entire body was enveloped in a deep crimson glow.

Suddenly, my body felt as light as a feather, and strength surged from every joint.

Realizing this, I made eye contact with Mil as if to say, “Watch this,” and focused all my strength into my legs.

“On your mark!”

With a powerful kick against the ground, I leaped into the air.

In an instant, my body soared to an unbelievable height, leaving Mil with wide-open eyes.

A vertical jump that easily cleared a two-story building—an extraordinary feat.

Furthermore, I soared over the large school building, ultimately reaching a high point where I could overlook the royal capital.

After landing gracefully, I turned towards Mil with a triumphant smile, as if to say, “Told you so.”

“With this, I can move swiftly like the others. It may be a bit different from regular body enhancement magic, but it shouldn’t be a problem.”

“...,” Mil murmured with her eyes still wide open, her voice barely audible.

“I-I don’t think it’s just fine. In fact, I believe it’s far more powerful than regular body enhancement magic.”

“Huh? Isn’t this what everyone can do?”

Since this is the only spell I can use, I don’t really notice much of a difference.

How is it different from other body enhancement magic?

Is the one I’m using really that powerful?

“Even if a highly skilled mage with a magic power level exceeding 200 were to use body enhancement magic, they wouldn’t be able to jump to such high places. What kind of magic did you use, Sachi-san?”

“It’s called ‘Foolhardy Might of the Inferno,’ a magic that has a probability of about once in ten thousand uses to greatly enhance the physical abilities of the user. I learned that. Similar to instant-death magic, the success rate depends on the user’s luck value, so if I use it, it’s guaranteed to succeed.”

“...Another probability-based magic, huh?”

Mil stared at me in astonishment, her jade eyes wide open.

Seeing her speechless, I further explained, “But well, when it fails, it seems that the physical abilities decrease significantly. So, it’s still a flawed magic. I’ve never failed, so I don’t know how much weaker I would become.”

“Could it be that in exchange for the possibility of failure, it provides effects surpassing regular body enhancement magic when successful?”

“Well, probably...?”

Honestly, as someone who uses it, I don’t see any difference from other body enhancement magic. It succeeds reliably, and the effects are outstanding.

Look, just like this...

“I can easily lift you up, Mil. Up, up we go!”

“Wait, scary! It’s not just high, it’s way too high!”

I threw Mil high up into the air and gently caught her as she descended.

With this kind of incredible strength, there shouldn't be any problems.

But seriously, Mil is so slender and light.

“Well, anyway, you don't have to worry about me, Mil. It's safe for you to use body enhancement magic too. If we dawdle, the day will end, so let's hurry to the mountain.”

“Y-Yes...”

Mil, looking completely exhausted even before the monster subjugation request, enhanced her body using regular body enhancement magic.

Seeing her finish, I took hold of Mil's hand and dashed towards the eastern gate of the royal capital.

Chapter 17

Surprising Uses of Luck stat

After school.

We had accepted a request for subjugation and left the capital city...

Now, we were racing through the grasslands.

“Hahaha! You’re slow, Mil! We have to hurry or it’ll be nighttime!”

“You’re really too fast!”

Using body enhancement magic to boost our agility, we merged with the wind at superhuman speed.

However, unlike Mil, who was desperately running, I was running ahead of her with a lightness like jogging.

It seemed that my... or rather, the probability magic’s [Fool’s Strength Grand Deal] had a much stronger effect than regular body enhancement magic, just as Mil had said.

Even with Mil’s high magic power and using body enhancement magic, she couldn’t catch up to me at all.

I could even leave her behind while skipping.

It probably had to do with our original physical abilities, but there shouldn’t be that much of a difference between me and Mil.

So, the reason there was such a gap between us in this race on the grasslands was solely due to the difference in the effectiveness of our magic.

Probability magic is amazing.

I slightly slowed down and went up to Mil's side, running side by side with her as I asked.

"What if I give you a piggyback ride, Mil? Come on, hop on your big sister's back."

"I absolutely refuse because that's embarrassing!"

Motivated by the feeling of not wanting to be piggybacked, Mil escaped from me at full speed.

Wait, wait!

While playing chase with Mil, before we knew it, we had arrived at Smoke Rock Mountain.

"Yay! I win! Maybe Mil should exercise a little more."

"...I don't think that's the issue."

Mil was panting heavily, with her hands on her knees.

On the other hand, I didn't feel tired at all and was happily jumping around, reveling in my victory.

"Mil, your body is slender, so maybe you should eat more to increase your stamina and stuff. Your breasts might grow bigger too."

"I've already given up on that, so it's fine!"

Mil's voice exploded with anger, even though she should be exhausted.

It's good that she seems energetic.

I accidentally touched upon something I shouldn't have, but if she has that much excess stamina, it shouldn't be a problem.

Anyway, it took about thirty minutes since leaving the capital.

High-speed movement using body enhancement magic was truly remarkable, allowing us to reach Smoke Rock Mountain in an unbelievably short amount of time.

In the future, this method of transportation will probably become mainstream, but honestly, I don't want to use it too often.

We don't have a large amount of magical essence, and the number of times we can use magic is limited.

It would be undesirable to run out of magical essence before starting the subjugation request.

Well, this time, we were able to reach our destination with just one use of body enhancement magic, so we still have plenty of magical essence left.

"Well, let's quickly take care of the request. It was the subjugation of 'Little Crow Shuka,' right? Where could it be?"

"I don't know much about that magical beast either, so we'll have to search for it visually..."

Yeah, that's right.

As I thought, I looked around, but I couldn't see any signs of an animal that looked like it.

In fact, the entire area was covered in thick white smoke.

Smoke Rock Mountain lived up to its name, constantly emitting clouds of smoke.

Even Mil's face next to me was slightly blurred.

In such an environment, how are we supposed to find a small bird?

I see.

Scouting magic is a type of magic that detects magical essence and determines the location of people or magical beasts.

Perhaps the Little Crow Shuka has such a small amount of magical essence that it can't be detected.

Or maybe it excels at manipulating magical essence and has the stealth ability to temporarily seal its own magical essence to hide from magicians and others.

If even Mil's high magical power scouting magic can't detect it, then the latter possibility is likely.

In that case, it would make sense that people passing through here are falling victim to theft by the Little Crow Shuka.

A bird that approaches at high speed, hidden in white smoke and rock crevices, without triggering scouting magic, is something that ordinary people wouldn't be able to react to.

"Hmm, this is troublesome..."

"Yes..."

As we both crossed our arms and pondered with a "hmm," I suddenly

remembered something.

“By the way, the people passing through here have been having their belongings stolen by the Little Crow Shuka, right?”

In that case, maybe we can lure out the Little Crow Shuka by using food and other supplies as bait. What do you think?”

“Lure it out?”

If we pretend to be travelers, walking through Smoke Rock Mountain while flaunting our belongings, the Little Crow Shuka might attack us.

I proposed something quite traditional, but Mil nodded without showing any signs of astonishment or exasperation.

“That might be a good idea. If we walk through Smoke Rock Mountain while showing off our supplies, it might appear.

Do you have any good food with you?”

“Ta-da! Look, I have a bag full of piled-up snacks!”

“Why did you bring them...”

Mil had a mixed expression of exasperation and surprise.

On the other hand, I answered with a slightly embarrassed “teehee.”

“I thought we could eat them at the top of the mountain...”

“This isn’t a field trip, you know.”

Or rather, I received Mil’s exasperated gaze this time.

Well, I didn’t want my stomach to growl during class, so I started

stuffing snacks in my bag when going to school.

I had been hiding it all this time because I didn't want to be seen as a glutton.

I never thought it would come in handy like this.

So, holding up the bag of snacks I brought, I started walking towards the upper part of Smoke Rock Mountain.

We continued walking for about an hour.

We had reached the middle slope of Smoke Rock Mountain.

“Look, look! This area isn't as smoky, and you can even see the capital city from here! It looks like that from up there too.”

The white smoke emanating from Smoke Rock Mountain varied in density depending on the location.

There were places where the dense fog made it impossible to see anything, but there were also areas where the smoke was thin enough to enjoy the view.

“That lake over there is beautiful, and you can see the grasslands too. It's the perfect view! The snacks are delicious too, and our efforts to climb the mountain were worth it.”

“...Um, haven't we changed the subject?”

As I nibbled on the stick-shaped snack and turned around, there stood a blue-hooded girl with a sullen expression.

“Oh, weren't we here for a field trip?”

“I came here to subjugate the Little Crow Shuka...”

Oh, right, right.

I completely forgot our original purpose because the view was so amazing.

Due to living in the dim forest for so long, I got carried away by the sense of liberation from the beautiful scenery.

“Oh, come on. You ate so many snacks, and now we don’t have any food left to lure the Little Crow Shuka.”

I watched as Mil puffed up her cheeks, feeling remorseful as I recalled something.

“By the way, we walked quite a distance to get here, but we weren’t attacked by the crow-like Shuka even once.”

“Yeah, that’s true. We even made it obvious that we were carrying baggage.”

Even though there wasn’t anything valuable among our belongings, it’s hard to believe that magical beasts would make such judgments. If anything, I think we would be more likely to be targeted since we have snacks and food with us.

“Maybe they don’t like sweets?”

“It’s unlikely that magical beasts have preferences. Besides, the main thing they eat is humans, so just by us walking, we were already bait for them...”

That’s true. Magical beasts consume humans to absorb the magical essence they possess. By doing so, they can enhance their own magical essence and evolve into stronger magical beasts. In other words, not just the snacks, but we ourselves are legitimate prey. But they didn’t seem interested in us at all. I wonder if we don’t look appetizing.

“They might be cautious as well. Instinctively, they might consider us dangerous and avoid approaching us.”

“In that case, it means they are afraid of Mil, who has a high magical power, and they can’t come out. It means that Mil is scaring everyone.”

“Please don’t call me a monster!”

But, since magical beasts have the ability to sense magical essence, this theory isn’t entirely wrong, is it? Mil does have monster-level magical power, so they might be afraid of her and hiding.

“Or maybe it’s because Mil’s luck stat is zero, so Shuka can’t find her?”

“That’s why, please don’t blame it on others... Well, I can’t deny that possibility.”

Seems like I hit a weak spot, as Mil visibly drooped her shoulders, looking dejected. Maybe I was being a bit too mean.

“Well, let’s leave the jokes at that. Maybe it’s because some other student wearing the same uniform as us caused trouble before, and they’re cautious of us.”

“Yeah, that possibility is quite likely. ‘The Crow’s Shuka Subjugation Request’ is not the first time it’s been issued, so maybe another student from the academy came here on a subjugation request before.”

At this point, we’re completely stuck.

If they’re being cautious and not coming out, it means that it’s impossible for us to subjugate the Shuka on our own.

“In the end, it might be better to patiently wait for someone else to pass by. We can subjugate the Shuka by intervening and helping when

they are being attacked... that seems more realistic, doesn't it?"

"Yeah, maybe. That seems to be the only option..."

As I was about to agree with Mil's suggestion, I suddenly noticed a conveniently placed stone rolling at my feet.

Without thinking, I picked it up and had a sudden realization.

"What's the matter, Sachi-san? Is there something about that stone that caught your attention?"

"No, there's something I want to try..."

Without hesitation, I clenched the stone in my right hand and swung it up high.

And then...

"Take this!"

"Huh..."

I threw the stone with a powerful swing towards the depths of the smoky mountain path.

The stone disappeared into the faint smoke, and its whereabouts became unknown.

With a bewildered expression, Mil opened her mouth in utter surprise.

"What... what are you doing?"

"Well, if my luck stat is high enough, perhaps the randomly thrown stone might coincidentally land right in the middle of the flock of

Shuka crows, allowing us to determine their location...”

“Well, that’s just...”

Seems impossible, doesn’t it?

Before Mil could finish her sentence, we heard the sound of the stone hitting the ground.

And then, what do you know...

From beyond the smoke, the silhouette of birds taking off in a flurry could be seen.

“What!?”

We both exclaimed in disbelief.

The birds that took flight were pitch-black, as if dipped in ink, with distinctive horns growing on their heads.

There was no doubt that they were the target Shuka crows for subjugation.

More than half of what I said was meant as a joke, but I never expected the stone I threw to actually hit the flock of Shuka crows directly.

“That luck stat is amazing...”

“Is it really thanks to the luck stat!? And hey, aren’t they flying towards us with great speed? Did throwing the stone anger them?!”

That’s true.

The small black birds with horns were flying precisely towards us

from beyond the smoke.

With shrill cries piercing the air, they stared at us with sharp eyes.

They're really angry. It seems I've earned their unnecessary wrath.

But since we've found the target magical beasts, for now...

“...Alright.”

“That's not good! They're clearly furious! Get ready, Sachi-san!”

Mil raised her voice, scolding me.

It was a spur-of-the-moment action, so I'm sorry.

Chapter 18

Friendship

After completing the request to subjugate the Crow Shuka with Mil, we used body strengthening magic to travel and managed to return to the academy before nightfall.

At the request reception desk, we presented Crow Shuka's horn as proof of the subjugation and finished reporting the request.

Returning to the dormitory, it was already time for dinner, so I quickly washed my hands and took my seat at the dining table.

Later, while resting in my room, I sighed and spoke to my roommate, Mil.

"We only earned one point from today's subjugation. The goal seems so far away, it's overwhelming."

"Yes, it does."

This "Crow Shuka subjugation request" we took was more like an act of mercy from the receptionist. We only received a single point for the subjugation.

We have to earn 100 points by the end of the term, and at this rate, it's impossible to achieve our goal.

Furthermore, since we took the request together, only one of us will receive the points.

By the way, there was a dispute between Mil and me about who should get the points for this subjugation.

Though to an observer, it would seem like a peaceful discussion, we ended up arguing with each other, trying to give up our points.

Eventually, we reluctantly decided to settle it fairly with a coin toss.

The winner would have the freedom to decide the distribution of the subjugation points.

In the end, I won.

“Yay! I won again! So, Mil, congratulations, the subjugation points are yours this time.”

“I can’t really celebrate properly.”

So, the subjugation points were forcibly given to Mil.

I’ve never lost in a coin toss or card game, although I’ve only played against Mulburry-san every time.

It’s probably due to my luck stat of 999.

I can probably use this method in the future too, to resolve conflicts like this, even though it’s likely to be exposed easily.

“If only we could take on requests that give us a lot of points, then all our worries would be solved.”

“That’s true.”

That’s the crux of the problem.

Unlike other noble students, as commoners, we can’t get recommended for good quests.

If we could only resolve that fundamental issue, we wouldn’t have to

worry so much.

“I wonder if there’s any way for us commoners to demonstrate our abilities. Something like saying, ‘We’re actually strong!’”

“It seems difficult for now. There don’t seem to be any events or practical classes until the end-of-term exams.”

“Well...”

Certainly, it doesn’t seem like there will be opportunities to showcase our abilities.

The closest opportunity would be the end-of-term exams, held jointly for each grade.

To take those exams, we need subjugation points.

“What if a gigantic magical beast attacked the magic academy? If I defeated it, I could become a great hero in an instant.”

“Don’t say such dangerous things.”

But without something as drastic as that, we commoners won’t be given any quests at all.

Also, from today’s subjugation request, I realized that I’m probably not suited for hunting small magical beasts. My specialty, instant death magic, has tremendous power against individual magical beasts, but not against multiple ones.

There’s a magic called “Hell’s Gate,” which can kill multiple targets, but I’m still not very skilled at using it.

In fact, towards the end, I was simply using body strengthening magic

to punch the bird.

So, I want to face a single formidable opponent like a super-gigantic magical beast, but as commoners, there's no way we'll be given such a subjugation request.

Damn it, I can easily kill any magical beast with a single blow.

"In that case, maybe I should challenge the 'Headmaster,' who seems to be the strongest in this academy..."

"You occasionally say the most absurd things, Sachiko."

Oh, no, I was just joking. Just joking.

Even I wouldn't do something as reckless as that.

But if we were able to win a fight against a strong person within the academy and demonstrate our abilities, perhaps even us commoners could start getting recommended for challenging quests.

It's not a bad strategy, if you think about it. While pondering that, I suddenly remembered something.

"By the way, I remember there were students in the academy who were engaging in mock battles or something like that."

"Oh, yes. I believe they were second-year students, judging by the accent color on their uniforms."

The uniforms at the Royal Harvest Magic Academy have slight design differences for each grade. The boys wear jackets and long coats, while the girls wear blouses, skirts, and mini capes, all predominantly black. However, each grade has an accent color incorporated into their uniforms.

First-year students have blue accents, second-year students have green, and third-year students have red.

These accent colors remain fixed for the three years, and apparently, incoming students are given the accent color previously used by the outgoing third-year students. This cycle allows anyone to identify a student's grade based on their accent color.

Regarding the dress code at this academy, there's quite a bit of freedom. As long as you maintain the basic form of the uniform and can be recognized as a student of the academy, you're allowed to make modifications and alterations as you please. Students can even make special requests when ordering their uniforms, such as adjusting the length of the coat or changing the mini cape to a long cape.

For example, Mil seems to have a fondness for the "Little Red Riding Hood" style, as she has a hood attached to her mini cape and dyed it a deep blue.

Well, considering that battles against magical beasts are commonplace for academy students, it's understandable that they wouldn't bother with meticulously maintained attire. The two second-year students engaged in the mock battle were also wearing their uniforms while casting magic at each other, so they looked quite disheveled.

"Speaking of which, is there any particular significance to these mock battles they have?"

"Originally, it started as a light sparring activity to bridge the gap between nobles and commoners. The academy wanted to create an environment where anyone could learn magic equally. It seems to be a tradition the academy promoted a long time ago."

Hmm, that's interesting. That seems like a perfect way to eliminate inhibitions and create an equal environment, especially considering the absence of social distinctions.

"It seems that now these mock battles serve as tests of strength or as duels to resolve conflicts. But weren't they explained during the

entrance ceremony?”

“Oh, well... I found the chairs we were sitting on during the entrance ceremony to be exceptionally comfortable.”

Mil gave me a reproachful look, as if she wanted to say, “You occasionally say the most absurd things, Sachiko.”

I was quite relaxed and comfortably dozing off during the entrance ceremony. Mil is very serious, so she was wide awake, listening to the speeches.

Anyway, now that I understand why the students engage in mock battles, let's get back to the point.

“Well, there's no use in complaining endlessly. The opportunity will come eventually, so let's patiently wait without rushing.”

“...I've been with you all this time, and I can't help but notice that Sachiko, you're always so 'optimistic,' or rather, you never doubt that you'll find happiness.”

“Yeah. That's because I'm an incredibly lucky girl with a luck stat of 999! It's quite different from Mil, the extremely unlucky girl with a luck stat of 0!”

“Mind your own business!”

“Well, things will work out somehow.”

That's my motto.

The next day.

Surprisingly, that golden opportunity came sooner than expected.

“If you don’t mind, would you like to join us for a subjugation request?”

“Hmm?”

As soon as the morning class ended and lunch break began...

A girl approached me at my seat and called out to me.

She had fluffy, chestnut-colored braids and a serene, youthful face.

Just like her gentle impression, her way of speaking was relaxed and unhurried.

Even from her refined choice of words, she exuded an air of sophistication.

“Um, you’re in the same class as me...”

The girl with the largest... not that... what was her name again?

As I struggled to recall, the chestnut-haired girl smiled knowingly.

“My name is Maron Melange.”

“Oh, right, Maron-san. Sorry, I’m really bad at remembering people’s names...”

“My seat is at the front, closest to the corridor, so it’s the farthest from Sachi-sama. We don’t have many opportunities to meet, so it can’t be helped.”

She offered a subtle follow-up while smiling gently.

However, her words were laced with a saintly kindness, and her considerate nature could be felt just by conversing with her.

Come to think of it, there were various rumors circulating within the class.

Like how she helped search for a lost student ID, or how she assisted with cleaning when there was no time, or how she forgave someone without a single displeased expression after they accidentally spilled juice on her.

Even though it hadn't been much time since she enrolled, there were already numerous anecdotes circulating about her among the classmates.

So she already had quite a few friends.

Conversely, I had no friends at all, and in fact, I was being avoided by those around me. That's why it felt strange for her to approach me, and I could sense the curious gazes of my classmates.

It was uncomfortable. Wait, why did she come talk to me in the first place?

Unable to disregard Maron-san's kind smile, I mustered my courage and asked her.

"So, what does it mean to join a subjugation request together?"

"Well, yesterday, I happened to be standing right behind Sachi-sama and the others at the request reception desk, and I overheard the entire conversation. Because you don't have a family crest, you hardly get any introduction to subjugation requests, right?"

"Oh, so you were there at that time, Maron-san."

I didn't notice at all.

Actually, thinking that she witnessed that scene, it feels embarrassing.

I mean, at that time, I only got introduced to two requests, and I must have shown quite an uncool side.

“I didn’t intend to eavesdrop, but I happened to overhear... So I thought if there was anything I could do to help, and I came up with the idea of taking the subjugation test together.”

“Together? Ah, I see...”

If I remember correctly, the receptionist said, “If you take a request together with other noble students, we can introduce more requests.”

If a student from a prestigious family with a family crest is with us, the chances of completing the requests would increase.

Having heard that, Maron-san approached us, considering our situation.

“My family is the Melange family, so I have some flexibility even at this academy. I was able to receive a reasonable number of requests yesterday, so if you don’t mind, would you like to take a request together? I would be very happy if we could have lunch together as well...”

“Oh, yes, please!”

It was a wishful conversation.

I noticed that there was another girl sitting next to Maron-san, and she waved her hand lazily in our direction.

She was a girl with a similar fluffy impression... or rather, a drowsy girl.

She wore a pointed hat, yellow like a nightcap, and glossy golden long hair peeked out from the gaps.

She kept her eyes drowsy from start to finish, and I recall her getting scolded by the teacher for dozing off during class.

In my own mind, I called her the “sleep-deprived girl,” and she seemed to be Maron-san’s friend.

She was also invited to join us for the requests.

And we would have lunch together!

The students of the Royal Harvest Academy of Magical Arts generally had their lunch at the cafeteria on campus.

The same went for me and Mil, we always ate our meals together, just the two of us, at a corner table in the cafeteria.

I actually wanted to get closer to the classmates and somehow join a group, but it didn’t work out well. Moreover, Mil didn’t seem enthusiastic about it.

Even when I invited her to approach our classmates together, she would always...

“...Please go ahead, Sachi-san.”

She would say something like that, seeming sulky.

I knew she had a shy personality, but it was becoming quite obvious that she was deliberately avoiding the classmates.

But it felt like a tall wall to approach them alone, so in the end, we would always have lunch together as just the two of us until today.

However, today, I was invited to have lunch with Maron-san, who was popular in the class.

Inside, I felt an intense surge of excitement, and I called out to Mil in the next seat.

“Hey, Mil. Let’s take the subjugation request together. If Maron-san and the others help us, we can be introduced to higher-scoring requests, and we can earn enough points by the end-of-term exams. Plus, we can have lunch together...”

“...”

Contrary to my excitement and loquacity...

Mil completely sealed her lips and bowed her head.

There was no response at all.

I thought something might be wrong with her, so I leaned over to look at her face, but...

“...Mil?”

“...I’ll pass. I’ll refrain.”

Without making eye contact, Mil stood up and left the classroom.

Maron-san and I could only watch her back in bewilderment, exchanging puzzled glances.

...Why?

Chapter 19

Alone Together

Mille Feuille is an unfortunate girl. (T/N: Her name is a french cheese)

Due to her luck value of 0, she constantly experiences misfortune and there hasn't been a single day where nothing bad happened.

Losing things and dropping things is a common occurrence for her, and it's always raining unexpectedly when she goes out. Tripping and falling has become routine for her.

She is truly a person despised by the gods.

However, she has never harbored any resentment towards anyone.

On the contrary, she often feels sorry, believing that her own misfortune might be causing unhappiness to those around her.

When her mother fell ill, she thought the same.

"Mom... I'm sorry...! It's my... my fault...!"

"Mill, it's not your fault. It's just your mother's bad luck," her mother said with a smile.

But Mille believed that her misfortune had brought sickness upon her mother.

As much as she was willing to bear her own misfortune, she didn't wish for her mother to suffer. So, she thought it was her fault that her mother fell ill.

Of course, it was just baseless speculation.

Luck values are still surrounded by many mysteries, and no concrete effects have been proven. The only thing known for sure is that there might be a slight difference in daily happiness.

Therefore, even though she was considered an unfortunate girl with a luck value of 0, it was uncertain whether her misfortune affected those close to her.

But Mille believed that she was causing unhappiness to those around her because of her own misfortune.

And an event occurred that reinforced such suspicions and turned them into certainty.

“Once again, you’ve done something clumsy, Mil. You’re as hopeless as ever,” someone from her hometown, the village of Olivier, said.

There was a girl named Plum Cuillère in the village. She was one of the lord’s daughters and had a strong and lively personality, contrasting with Mille’s timid and quiet nature.

Despite their contrasting personalities, Mille and Plum often played together. They spent a lot of time together because Plum’s residence was near Mille’s home.

Additionally, there were no other children of their age in the village, so they frequently engaged in activities together.

They had a very good relationship. It had become customary for Plum, who was proactive and caring, to take care of Mille, the unlucky girl with a luck value of 0.

A clumsy sister and a caring sister—it was the impression most people had of them, as they had never seen the two fight.

However, one day...

“Mille!”

While playing in the forest near the village, Mille was attacked by a plant-type monster.

Unluckily, they encountered a plant-type monster that wouldn't normally come near the village. Perhaps Mille's misfortune had attracted it to their play area.

Mille was captured by the monster and almost dragged deep into the forest. But Plum came to her rescue.

“[Flaming Sphere: Flame Sphere]!”

Thanks to her noble lineage, Plum had a considerably high magical power. She had studied magic since childhood and aspired to become a national mage.

Using the magic she had learned, Plum attacked the plant-type monster and released Mille from its grasp.

However, the enraged monster turned its attention to Plum and attacked her.

Releasing a large amount of venom from its body, Plum couldn't avoid it.

Having been exposed to a significant amount of venom, Plum experienced excruciating pain, but she managed to cast another spell and drive away the plant-type monster.

Eventually, the two managed to return to the village, but their condition was far from safe.

“Ugh... Urgh...”

The venom Plum had been exposed to not only had the power to corrode the human body but also to paralyze magical energy.

Although a small amount would have had little effect, Plum's young body was covered in a large amount of venom.

As a result, she lost her ability to control magic effectively.

The magical incantations didn't reach the magical essence, and even if they did, the spells' power became feeble.

Modern medicine deemed it incurable, and Plum's dream of becoming a national mage was completely shattered.

"I wish I never met you! Don't ever appear before me again, you jinx!"

When Mille heard those words from her cherished childhood friend, she reaffirmed that she was indeed a bringer of misfortune.

From that moment, she avoided interacting with people as much as possible.

If she got close to someone, they would be afflicted by misfortune again.

Therefore, she decided not to become friends with anyone, not to get close to anyone. That's what she had resolved in her heart.

But...

A silver-haired girl appeared before her.

In order to earn money for her mother's medical expenses and find a way to cure Plum's magical impairment, Mille had taken the entrance exam for the magic academy.

The silver-haired girl she met there was named Sachiko, a very mysterious child.

At first, Mille wanted to brush her off with a cold attitude.

But Sachiko was unexpectedly persistent and assertive, making it difficult for Mille to refuse.

They ended up cooperating and through their actions together, Mille became increasingly aware of Sachiko's extraordinary nature.

“You see, despite appearances, my only merit is my luck value. When it comes to being happy, I have the utmost confidence that I can surpass anyone else.”

For some reason, Sachiko was a special presence who didn't experience misfortune when she was with Mille. She didn't stumble when Mille stumbled and instead found amusement in Mille's clumsy moments.

In fact, since Mille started accompanying Sachiko, her own misfortunes had significantly decreased, and she felt that very few unpleasant things were happening to her.

Sachiko was a super lucky girl who seemed to neutralize even Mille's misfortune. So Mille found herself relying on Sachiko and wanting to spend more time together with her.

However, misfortune struck suddenly once again.

“The request reception desk is where students are assigned suitable requests.”

Due to her commoner status, Mille couldn't receive the academy's requests as she wished.

She thought this was another misfortune she had brought upon herself.

Even if she continued to act together with Sachiko, she wouldn't survive in this academy alone.

To safely advance to the next grade and eventually graduate, she needed the cooperation of other students.

For instance, Maron Meringue, the female student who had approached her earlier, could be one such ally.

However, whenever Mille got involved with someone, misfortune would inevitably befall them.

Sachiko was a special lucky girl, so she was exempt, but it wasn't necessarily the same for others.

That's why when Maron approached her, Mille fled the classroom as if escaping.

And now, in the courtyard of the academy, she sat on a bench, sighing deeply with regret.

“Haah...”

Being involved with her would bring nothing but misfortune. So avoiding contact with Maron was the right thing to do.

But she felt it was impolite to simply run away.

Perhaps there was a different way to handle the situation.

With Mille's presence, Sachiko's position could become precarious too if she continued to act like this.

“Isn’t this unpleasant? You being with her is dangerous too, isn’t it?”

Mille pondered over her complicated feelings, not knowing how to express them, while gazing at her beautiful magical tool, a pendant.

Although her mother had given it to her as a good luck charm before the entrance exam, she had yet to experience its effects.

That was because the pendant merely changed color in response to the owner’s magical essence.

It was nothing more than a psychological comfort. Nevertheless, Mille treasured the pendant and kept it as her protective charm.

Come to think of it, for a super unlucky girl like herself to meet Sachiko, the super lucky girl, was quite fortunate.

Since she managed to pass the entrance exam, there might be some effect in these kinds of ornaments that raised one’s happiness.

“Mill, I found you!”

“What?!”

While she was focused on her pendant, she suddenly heard a familiar voice from behind.

When she turned around, there was the lively girl with silver hair she was used to seeing.

“S-Sachiko-san? Weren’t you having lunch with Maron-san?”

“I canceled it because you suddenly ran off. Ahh, what a shame. It was a chance for you to make a new friend.”

Sachiko came around from behind the bench and sat down next to

her, expressing her discontent.

Watching her from the corner of her eye, Mille awkwardly asked,

“In that case, why did you chase after me?”

“Huh? Because you suddenly ran off...”

“Not that. I’m saying it would be wiser to make new friends instead of being with me.”

“I don’t have a single good reason to stay with myself. Instead, I am constantly accompanied by the danger of attracting unhappiness. On the other hand, if I become friends with other people, your school life will surely become much easier.

Why did you follow me and give up that chance?”

“It’s pointless for me to be the only one making friends. Let’s all be friends, including Mil.”

“Oh, I’m fine. I don’t want to become friends with anyone.”

“Don’t want to become friends?”

“If people become friends with me, they will all end up unhappy.”

Like her mother, like her childhood friend. And all the people I made unhappy, I will only receive harsh words.

“So you’re avoiding Maron-san... or rather, everyone in the class?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

“Because you might make them unhappy if you become friends? So

you don't want any friends?"

"If it means making someone unhappy, then I don't need friends."

Mil affirmed once again, clearly stating her position. She didn't need friends. It was better to be alone than to make others unhappy. That was Mil's true feelings.

Then Sachi fell into deep thought, remaining silent for a while, and eventually seemed to come up with something as she spoke.

"Well... then I guess I'm not needed either."

"Huh?! Uh, no, it's not like that. Sachi-san, you're different..."

"Well..."

Glancing briefly at Sachi, she had a smug grin on her face. She seemed to thoroughly enjoy the bewildered reaction from Mil.

Mil blushed and turned away in frustration.

"Alright, that's enough."

"Oh, sorry, sorry! I just wanted to tease you a little!"

This person, really...

Thinking this, Mil sighed, and Sachi cleared her throat and brought the conversation back.

"So basically, you don't want to get involved with various people and bring unhappiness upon yourself. But you don't have to worry at all, right? Because I'm always with you and I'm fine. It's just a misconception."

“That’s because Sachi-san has a luck value of 999. It doesn’t necessarily mean others will be fine. In fact, I made a close friend in my hometown village unhappy in the past.”

Recalling the words spoken by her childhood friend, Mil tightly gripped her chest. She thought that she didn’t need friends if it meant going through such experiences again, and she spoke to Sachi once more.

“You don’t have to worry about me, Sachi. Even if it’s just you, please go to Maron-san’s side. I’ve heard that the Melange family, Maron’s noble family, is highly renowned for their contributions to the prosperity of the magic nation through magical tool development. If you’re with them, you’ll be able to receive plenty of requests, and your school life will become stable.”

On the flip side, if they didn’t accept Maron’s proposal now, their future school life would become considerably difficult.

Currently, within their class, the close friends were starting to form their own groups. However, Mil and Sachi were in a slightly detached position, mainly because they were commoners, a rarity in this academy. It wouldn’t be accurate to say

that they were being avoided, but they felt somewhat distant from others. Additionally, both of them weren’t particularly skilled in socializing, which resulted in their isolation within Class 1-A.

In such circumstances, it was truly fortunate that Maron, the popular one in their class, approached them. It was an opportunity that they couldn’t afford to waste, as it would only accelerate their isolation.

With that in mind, Sachi tried to persuade Mil to go with Maron, but Sachi stubbornly insisted on considering Mil’s feelings.

“I do want to get along with Maron-san and the others, but I don’t want Mil to be left isolated.

What are you going to do, Mil?”

“W-Well, I...”

“As commoners without a noble background, even if we get introduced, we’ll only get low-level requests like defeating one monster point or something. Even if we do those, there’s no way we can reach a perfect score before the final exams. Are you okay with getting expelled like this?”

“I don’t want to get expelled. But I still can’t involve other people in my misfortune.”

Mil also stubbornly shook her head. Then Sachi, realizing that Mil wouldn’t change her mind, eventually sighed as if giving up.

“Well, if that’s what Mil says, I guess there’s no helping it. It’s a shame, but I’ll decline Maron-san’s invitation too.”

“Huh? W-Why would you do that? Sachi-san can just get along with Maron-san and the others...”

“If Mil doesn’t want to be friends, then I won’t either.”

“...”

What is this person even thinking? Mil wondered. While she appreciated Sachi’s concern, it wasn’t the time for such things. They needed to accomplish many school requests and earn enough points.

If they didn’t do that...

“If things continue like this, Sachi-san might also get expelled.”

“I’ll find a way to prevent that. We promised to graduate together and become national mages, didn’t we? Besides, I’m sure there are still other ways to survive. Let’s think of various methods.”

“...Even if you say let’s think, I can’t see any possible solutions.”

There couldn’t possibly be such methods. They had already realized how disadvantaged commoners were in this academy just a few days after enrolling. As long as they were commoners, surviving in a magic academy would be an arduous path.

But Sachi still had a way to save herself. The one blocking it was none other than Mil herself.

“I should have never been with someone like you!”

Causing someone unhappiness again because of her own actions... Mil didn’t want to experience that anymore.

Recalling past events, Mil made a decision.

Chapter 20

For the Sake of Friends

After finishing class, Maron invited me again to join her on a subjugation request, but I decided to decline and return to the student dormitory. The reason being that Mil had already gone back to the dormitory before me.

I had planned to take on a school request together with Mil today, but we had a small argument, and since then, Mil has been giving me the silent treatment. It feels like she's angry or sulking.

Mil is deliberately trying to create tension between us. If I become estranged from Mil, I can get along freely with Maron and the others. That's probably what she's thinking, but I'm not someone who falls for such transparent tactics.

So, for today, without taking on any requests, I returned to the student dormitory. When I entered my room, Mil was naturally there and looked at me with a surprised expression.

"What's wrong, Mil? You're making such a dumbfounded face. Was it really that surprising for me to come back to my own room?"

"..."

Mil blushed intensely and quickly averted her gaze when I playfully let out a smirk. It seems like I genuinely made her angry. Maybe I teased her a bit too much. But teasing her is so worthwhile, you know?

"Could it be that you thought if you went back first, I would compromise and go on a school request with Maron? I'll say it as many times as necessary, but I won't leave Mil behind to be with someone else."

“...”

Mil continued to avert her gaze without saying a word. Even when she sneakily glanced at me, her cheeks were still bright red, indicating her frustration. Is she really that bothered by my actions?

Well, I do think I'm being irrational. If I were considering survival in this academy, I should have definitely accepted Maron's invitation. But I don't want to be without Mil either. I conveyed my feelings by unexpectedly hugging Mil's slender body from behind.

“Just give up and cheer up, Mil. Let's think of a solution together.”

“I don't want to. I don't want to know you anymore, Sachi-san.”

Even after going this far, she still keeps ignoring me. I guess this is how it is. She's deliberately taking a cold attitude towards me, trying to create a rift between us. And she plans to make me get along with Maron and the others alone.

How naive, Mil. You're completely mistaken if you think you can sever ties with me over something like this.

“For someone who acts like that, take this!”

“Please, stop! Don't take my hood! Don't put anything inside it!”

In the end, on that day, Mil didn't speak to me even once after that.

The next morning.

When I woke up, I realized that Mil, who should have been sleeping in the adjacent bed, was nowhere to be found.

Checking the clock, it was still two hours before our usual school time. Where could she have gone so early in the morning? There wasn't any urgent business to attend to today.

Maybe she's still not in a good mood. Perhaps she didn't want to see my face anymore and went to school early. Or maybe she wants to minimize the time she spends with me by adjusting her school arrival time, trying to create a rift in our relationship.

"...If it has come to this, maybe I'll chase her to the bitter end."

I'll show her that it's a big mistake to think she can easily fall out with me. With that in mind, I also prepared for school early in the morning and decided to head to the academy two hours earlier than usual.

While walking to school, I started thinking. I must admit that I can understand Mil's perspective to some extent. She has a unique unfortunate constitution that can put those around her in danger. In my case, with a Luck Stat of 999, I'll be fine, but it won't be the same for our other classmates. I heard that she had had a friend in the past whom she accidentally brought misfortune upon, so I can understand her reluctance to be friends with anyone.

But would it not be a waste to end her own school life because of that? Considering that it is almost impossible for us commoners to reach our target grades no matter how hard we struggle.

"...That's why I told her let's think together."

Muttering to myself, I arrived at the school building surprisingly quickly. And I decided to first search for Mil.

Although, I already had an idea of her destination. The reason Mil came to the academy so early in the morning is most likely to take on a school request. The request counter is open even in the morning. However, the number of requests is extremely limited, and most of them are introduced to students who come in the afternoon. So, there are usually no people visiting the counter in the morning. But I've heard that occasionally there are some "hidden gem" requests available, so maybe Mil is hoping to find one by waking up early. If there happens to be such a request, even commoners like us would have a chance to be introduced, depending on the mood of the receptionist. It's a more realistic approach than visiting during the

highly competitive time after school. If Mil is thinking about surviving in the academy without relying on anyone's help, it's not surprising that she would reach this method first.

By the way, I was also considering this approach. So, I decided to search for Mil and head to the request counter myself.

That's when an unexpected scene caught my eye.

"Huh? Why are there so many people here?"

Nobody visits the request counter in the morning. At least, that's what I heard. However, there were already several students gathered around the counter, and it seemed a bit noisy. I wondered if something had happened and went to see what was going on.

"What's going on? Are they fighting early in the morning?"

"It seems that girl tried to accept a request recommended by the receptionist, and that guy who was standing behind her started arguing with her."

"Huh, just because of that?"

I thought the same thing. It's clearly strange to get into an argument for such a reason. As I was wondering, another student next to me started a conversation.

"What's the deal? A fight early in the morning?"

"It seems like that girl tried to accept a request recommended by the receptionist, and that guy who was standing behind her intervened," he explained.

"Oh, I see."

I secretly agreed. It made sense. So, if I understood correctly, Mil, who was waiting in line early in the morning, won the chance to accept a single request, and the guy behind her thought, “Wait a minute,” and tried to stop her.

In the morning, it seems that only one reception window is open, and it’s a first-come, first-served basis to get the chance to be recommended a request. So, it wouldn’t be strange for someone to pick a fight over it, right? Mil, who woke up earlier than anyone else, is praiseworthy, isn’t she?

“By the way, isn’t that guy Kaien from Class C?”

“Kaien? Is that the Kaien from the Shifonard family?”

“...Shifonard family?”

Even as someone with shallow knowledge, I had heard of that prestigious family.

They are a renowned lineage, known as the epitome of noble families, producing numerous exceptional magicians who had contributed to the nation.

Especially during the times of frequent wars, they wielded their formidable skills and achieved numerous military exploits.

The Shifonard family conducted magical education for their children from a young age and reportedly allowed them to accompany actual monster hunts at the age of five.

They even made their children independent at the age of six and made them earn the tuition fees for elementary school by themselves.

Normally, one would need a national qualification to accept monster hunt requests, but the Shifonard family had the privilege of accepting requests from childhood.

In other words, they were a family of martial magicians.

They were often talked about in parallel with my own family, the Glacière family, but in terms of power dynamics, the Shifonard family was overwhelmingly superior.

The relationship between the two families had remained unchanged since ancient times, with the Glacière family constantly trying to catch up, so I often heard stories about it.

And this year, I heard a rumor that among the new students, there was a prodigy from the Shifonard family.

Is that red-haired guy the one they're talking about?

"He scored top marks on the entrance exam, and his magical power is probably among the top in all grades."

"Why is such a genius in the same year as us?"

From what I heard, that red-haired guy seemed to be quite a talented individual.

And it seems that Mil has caught the attention of that genius.

She really has no luck, that girl.

"Cut it out, you worthless commoner. Can't you understand that I'm telling you to hand over that request?"

Cornered by Kaien from the Shifonard family, Mil trembled in fear.

But despite that, she clung tightly to the request document she held in her arms, as if it were something precious.

It seems that Mil has no intention of giving up that request.

She's trying her best to muster her voice and drive Kaien away.

"I, I was actually the one waiting in line... for that request... with my friend."

"What the hell! I can't hear a word you're saying!"

Mil's voice was too weak, and Kaien became even more agitated, raising his voice.

I've been observing the situation for a while now, and it seems like he has quite a quick-tempered personality.

It wouldn't be good to provoke him any further, I think.

Just as I was about to step in and help, at that moment...

"T-This is... a very important request that I planned to take with my friend..."

"..."

Mil's heartfelt words caused my eyes to well up with tears.

A request that she planned to take with her friend, something precious.

Just like how I've been worried about Mil, she's been thinking only about me.

Even though she's been pretending to be cold towards me, she's secretly been doing her best.

She probably felt sorry for making me worry, for not being able to get

along with Maron-san because of her.

So she must have come to the reception desk early in the morning, thinking that she would at least secure the request.

I secretly made a vow in my heart to thank her properly later.

As I did, Kaien's veins bulged in response to Mil's rebellion.

"You, as a commoner, do you think you can snatch a request from me, the eldest son of the Shifonard family? Besides, there's no way a commoner like you can accomplish a monster hunt request!"

He arbitrarily decided that.

Unable to accept that, Mil, unusually, tried to voice her opposition.

"I-If I don't try... I won't know..."

"I'm telling you, it's too late to try after you fail the monster hunt request! If that's the case, hand it over to me, who can definitely accomplish the request!"

Perhaps due to the repeated angry outbursts, Mil was completely intimidated. She hunched down, losing her confidence, and eventually fell silent, keeping her mouth shut.

Could it be that her pitiful state further provoked him...?

Kaien shouted angrily.

"This academy is a world of pure meritocracy! Weak magicians must obey the commands of strong ones, that's the rule!

So give up already, you worthless commoner!"

“Aah!”

Finally, Kaien forcibly snatched the request document that Mil was holding so dearly, with a swift motion of his right hand. In the process, Mil’s fragile body was pushed and she let out a small scream as she fell to the floor.

Then, perhaps due to the impact, something flew out from around Mil’s neck. What fell in front of Kaien was her father’s cherished pendant, seemingly coming loose from the impact of being pushed.

Kaien looked at it, snorting derisively.

“Hah, pretending to be all fancy as a commoner, but it doesn’t suit you at all!”

In that unbelievable moment—

Kaien stepped on the pendant, crushing it.

“——!”

Twisting and grinding his foot, he mercilessly crushed the precious pendant.

Eventually, when he finished, Kaien stepped back...

Only the shattered remnants of the pendant, in a pitiful state, were left beneath his feet.

“Ah... Aah...!”

Mil remained seated, reaching out for the remnants of her cherished pendant.

No matter how much she touched it, the pendant wouldn’t revert to

its original form, and the blue light it once held eventually faded away, as if its life had extinguished.

Quiet tears welled up in Mil's round eyes. Gradually, she sobbed and knelt before the broken pendant.

Witnessing that scene from a short distance away, I felt something stirring within me.

And before I knew it, I found myself pushing aside the onlookers and stepping forward.

"You pathetic wreck like you isn't needed in this academy. Pack your things and go back to the countryside."

Kaien, about to leave with the snatched request document in hand, was stopped by my words. Something inside me exploded.

"Oh, excuse me, sir over there?"

"Huh? Who the hell are you..."

Thwack!

Only one sound echoed through the early morning school building.

"Huh?"

Kaien stood there, completely unaware of what had just happened, his cheeks reddened and swollen.

Similarly, the surrounding students were frozen as if doubting their own eyes.

Even Mil, who had been crouching down, raised her bewildered face.

But I didn't do anything difficult.

I just gave this idiot a smack.

Soon, Kaien, realizing that he had been slapped, shot me a sharp gaze.

“What the hell did you do?!”

That line should be directed at me.

If he doesn't understand what he did, I'll tell him directly.

“You should apologize.”

“Huh?”

“Apologize for taking this girl's request letter and breaking her precious pendant. Apologize for everything.”

He probably thinks he broke some pendant that commoners wear casually to intimidate them.

But that pendant is important to Mire.

It was the last creation of her late father, who was a magical tool maker.

Before enrolling in the magic academy, her mother gave it to her as a protective charm. It was an irreplaceable item.

And this guy...

“What should I apologize for, you damn commoner?! You should be bowing your head to the ground and apologizing!

Who the hell do you think I am?!"

"I don't know. Who are you?"

"I'm a member of the Sifonard family, a noble who doesn't allow conversation with the lowest of the low commoners.

You're a damn commoner without a family crest, getting carried away. Apologize right now, or I'll make you apologize by force!"

By force, huh?

I had a good idea.

"Oh, that's a good idea. How about we settle it with a mock battle to decide who will apologize?"

"Huh?"

"The weak have to obey the words of the strong in this academy, right? So how about we have a mock battle, and the winner gets to make the loser do anything they want?"

This academy is a world of complete meritocracy, where weak magicians must obey the words of the strong. That's what this guy himself said.

And in this magic academy, mock battles between students are traditionally allowed.

If that's the case, there's no better way to use that tradition.

We'll have a mock battle, clearly separate the weak from the strong, and make our case as magicians.

When I proposed that, Kaien sneered at me.

“Huh, you have some nerve, damn commoner! I’ll make you regret being born as a woman, and I’ll kick you out of this academy!”

“You’re the one who should be tucking your tail and running away.”

And so, I ended up agreeing to a mock battle against Kaien Sifonard.

He made my friend cry, and I will make sure he regrets it.

Chapter 91

The Magician of Fortune

The simulated battle was to be held at a training ground located a little away from the school building.

Basically, as long as it was within the school grounds, it didn't matter where the simulated battle took place.

Many students seemed to choose the training ground as the battlefield, so I followed suit and designated it as the location.

Fortunately, there was no one using the training ground from early morning on that day, so my application was smoothly approved.

“When participating in a simulated battle, it is essential to have a faculty member from our school accompany you, so please keep that in mind.”

When I went to the Student Council to submit my application, they kindly informed me of this. So, I caught Professor Lezan, whom I happened to pass by in the hallway, and asked him to accompany me for the simulated battle.

He was taken aback. “I thought the reception desk was noisy in the morning, but I didn't expect it to be your doing. And to think you're still new to the school and already engaging in a simulated battle.”

“Well, to be precise, it's not me.”

I was met with a bewildered look from Professor Lezan. It wasn't my fault, though. But well, since Mil had worked hard for me and I had assisted her, maybe it was partly my fault.

Anyway, the preparations for the simulated battle were now complete.

It seemed that there were various detailed rules for the simulated battle, but for now, excessive attacks were strictly prohibited.

It was not allowed to use magic that would cause the opponent to die or to inflict irreparable damage.

It went without saying that causing excessive harm was prohibited, and I was reminded to fight within the range where immediate repair was possible with healing magic.

There were other rules, such as the prohibition of premeditated magic usage and the allowance of direct attacks, but they also had to be within the range of repair.

And in the end, the victory or defeat would be determined when one side admitted defeat or when the referee deemed the continuation impossible.

After listening to the explanation from Professor Lezan, we arrived at the training ground, which would be the battlefield.

The opponent was probably already waiting inside the training ground.

Besides, there wasn't much time left until the first period, so it would be better to finish it quickly.

Let's go as fast as possible, I thought and quickened my pace, but Mil stopped at the entrance.

"What's wrong, Mil? Let's go quickly."

...

Ever since that incident, Mil had been silent, following behind me.

When her pendant was broken, her face was wet with tears, but now she had a gloomy expression.

As Mil stood there without saying anything, Professor Lezan seemed to understand the atmosphere and said, "I'll go ahead and take my place as the referee. The opponent should be that Kaien Sifonard, right? Do your best, please."

The teacher entered the training ground first.

Perhaps it was difficult to talk with the teacher around, but now that we were alone, Mil finally spoke.

"Why did you do something like that?"

"Something like what?"

"Hitting that red-haired student."

It was a question that came rather late, and it was difficult to sum up the reason in one word.

Since I couldn't think of a suitable reason, I gave a casual answer.

"Well, there's nothing I could do. My body moved on its own, you know."

"Your body moved on its own, but why did you come up with the idea of slapping his cheek of all things? And why did you even start a simulated battle..."

Mil once again lowered her head and fell silent.

Even though I was the one being blamed, Mil had a look of apology on her face for some reason.

Perhaps she was regretting getting me involved because of her actions.

In reality, I was the one who stuck my nose into it, so Mil had no reason to feel guilty.

So, in order to cheer up Mil, I teasingly said, “Well, it’s no use crying over spilt milk. Besides, you were so cold to me, but now you’re talking a lot. Maybe you’ve forgotten your own character?”

“Th-There are various reasons for that!”

As I asked with a smirk, Mil raised her blushing face.

I wonder if that distracted her a bit.

It’s not like Mil asked me to slap that red-haired idiot, so she shouldn’t feel guilty about it.

“Anyway, this is a fight that I instigated, so there’s no need for you to make that face. I just attacked him because he was annoying me.”

I tried to encourage her again, but for some reason, Mil’s expression darkened once more.

“But are you really going to fight against him?”

“Huh?”

“In this simulated battle, you won’t be able to use your instant-death magic that you’re good at. And I heard that the opponent is the son of the Sifonard family. They’re skilled not only in hunting magical beasts but also in dealing with mages.”

Since they come from a family of martial magicians, they must have trained to fight against other mages as well.

One of the duties of a National Mage is to apprehend mages who have committed crimes.

With the widespread use of magic, there have been cases of mages using it for criminal purposes, so National Mages go around catching them to maintain public safety.

I've heard that the Sifonard family is quite active in that field.

If that's the case, the red-haired guy must be skilled at fighting against mages.

"If you fight against someone like him, even someone like you, Sachi-san, won't get away unscathed. The difference in combat experience is too great."

"Well... I'll manage somehow. Probably."

"B-But relying on such vague reasons..."

"My mentor used to say, 'There are no absolutes in battles between mages.' So I think it'll probably be fine."

"However, the opponent is just too formidable. Maybe we should ask to cancel this simulated battle. Otherwise, Sachi-san will be in serious trouble..."

Mil started to ramble on.

Certainly, there are some concerns about this simulated battle.

The loser will have to obey whatever the winner says.

But that is not a reason to run away from this challenge.

Even if there are concerns, I must never run away from this battle.

Mil really doesn't understand anything.

So, with a sigh, I murmured, "Ugh, you're so annoying."

"Huh..."

"You really don't understand why I picked a fight with him, do you, Mil?"

"W-Why... Well, that is..."

I tease Mil, who suddenly becomes fidgety and uncomfortable, in a slightly teasing manner.

"If you don't understand that either, maybe I should stop talking to Mil altogether. You've been giving me the cold shoulder anyway. It seems like we never really understood each other, did we?"

"Huh, no, it's not that, it's just..."

I intentionally say something dismissive, and Mil frantically moves their hands.

And with a flushed face, she hesitantly speak unfamiliar words.

"S-So, because we're friends...?"

"Yeah, that's right. Anyone would get angry seeing their friend cry and their precious things being broken. And yet, Mil says it's better to stop and that I'll suffer. What about your feelings?"

I finally managed to say the words I wanted to hear.

I am fighting with that red-haired person because my friend, Mil, was made to cry. And my anger reached its peak. I should be allowed to vent those feelings.

After conveying that once again, Mil appeared apologetic and dejected.

“If you got angry on my behalf, I don’t want Sachiko to fight anymore. There’s no need for Sachiko to get hurt because of someone like me.”

She started saying something troublesome again.

I understand Mil’s sense of guilt to some extent, but this fight was completely my decision, so there’s no need for them to make such a face.

“This is for Mil’s sake as well as mine. Mil doesn’t need to feel any worse. ...And hey, from what I’ve been hearing, it seems like Mil only expects me to lose. You don’t trust your friend at all. Oh well, it seems our friendship was only that much.”

“N-No, it’s not like that! It’s not that I don’t trust Sachiko, but rather, I’m worried...”

Worried.

I didn’t miss that word.

That’s right, just like Mil worries about me, I’m concerned about her too. She had her pendant broken by that person, and she must have been truly frustrated, right?

“That may be true, but Mil is kind, so she wouldn’t even think of retaliating against that person. That’s why I thought someone else had to punish that red-haired person, and I took it upon myself to do it.”

Mil is timid and cowardly.

But more than that, she is an incredibly kind girl, so even if she were subjected to something terrible, she wouldn't seek revenge. That's why someone else needed to punish that red-haired person. And I just happened to take on that role.

As time is running out, I place my hand on Mil's small head and make a declaration.

"I will make that person bow his head without fail. I will channel your frustrations, Mil, so rest assured and watch from here."

"Sachiko..."

I turn towards the training ground where Kaien is waiting and walk towards the battlefield.

During that time, I can feel Mil continuously watching me with worried eyes from behind.

To reassure her, I turn around once again and say,

"And besides..."

"...?"

"He was taught how to defeat 'ordinary magicians,' right? I'm not an 'ordinary magician.'"

"...Are you saying that about yourself?"

It feels like I haven't seen that in a long time.

Mil lets out a small chuckle and quietly smiles at me.

Chapter 21

Incorrect Magical Theory

“Wow, what’s this...?”

As I entered the dome-shaped training ground, I noticed a large number of people gathered in the second and third-floor spectator seats. They all seemed to be students from the Magic Academy, and they were gazing with interest at the central venue where I currently stood.

Why are so many people gathered here?

I pondered this question when Professor Rezan, passing by the judge’s seat, explained it to me.

“I was surprised at first too, but it’s only natural to hold a mock battle when it comes to someone like Kaien Sifonard.

He’s an exceptionally talented individual among this year’s freshmen, so many students want to see his abilities.”

I see.

Looking at the spectator seats, it seemed that there were many students wearing uniforms with a blue accent. As fellow first-year students, it’s likely that they wanted to catch a glimpse of Kaien, who was at the top of the class.

So, all the attention from the crowd is focused on the red-haired male student standing in front of me. In contrast, I’m completely unnoticed. Well, I could even say I’m the center of attention.

It’s quite reckless for a commoner like me to engage in a mock battle against the scion of a prestigious magical family in this academy, especially considering how rare commoners are in this school.

“Hey, you took your sweet time. I thought you got scared and ran away,” Kaien said with a smirk.

“You must be joking. What aspect of you would make me scared?” I replied, mocking him.

As we exchanged glances, invisible sparks seemed to ignite. Just then, Professor Rezan, from the judge’s seat, spoke in a resolute voice.

“Now then, let the mock battle begin! I assume both of you are familiar with the rules.”

Kaien and I nodded in silent agreement.

He drew his staff from his waist and held its tip towards me, preparing himself. Since I had nothing to hold, I simply stood there without assuming any stance.

A temporary silence filled the training ground.

Even the spectators in the stands, who should have been filled with many students, fell silent, creating an atmosphere of tension.

During that brief moment, I contemplated.

As Mil had mentioned, I couldn’t use my specialty instant-death magic in this mock battle. With a magic power value of 1, I couldn’t even use regular magic, let alone have any defense against magic.

On the other hand, my opponent was skilled in fighting against mages, a master of interpersonal combat.

At first glance, it seemed like I had no chance of winning, but I still had a few other spells in my repertoire besides instant-death magic. And in the context of battling a mage, those spells could have a

tremendous impact.

And as soon as I saw Professor Rezan deeming us ready...

“It’s time to start!”

With a powerful voice, he signaled the beginning.

Without wasting a moment, I opened my right hand and recited the incantation, holding it up to myself.

“[The Arrival of Peace——Celestial Guardian——Protect the Defenseless Masses].”

I made the first move.

“[Momentary Peace——Aegis Friede].”

For an instant, my body was enveloped in a silver light.

However, it ended just like that, leaving Kaien, who was watching it directly, with a puzzled expression.

“Hey, what kind of magic is that? Nothing happened. Is that some kind of commoner’s repentance?”

His words caused the students in the spectator seats to chuckle.

Judging by their reactions, it seemed that none of the students were familiar with this magic.

Well, that’s understandable.

Unlike commonly taught magic, this is a probability-based magic that

varies in effectiveness depending on luck. It's a worthless magic if used by an ordinary magician, and it's probably not taught at the Magic Academy either.

After all, it's a magic of such low value.

However, if used by me, with a luck value of 999, the perspective on its value completely flips.

That's why Kaien absolutely had to stop me the moment I started chanting.

Because with this...

My victory was almost assured.

"An ordinary commoner who doesn't even know basic magic, let me show you what real magic is."

Kaien, wearing a confident smile, pointed his staff towards me and chanted.

"[Cycle of Seasons—Crimson Petals—Dance and Scatter on the Wind]—[Cremation of the Ash Blizzard—Petra Climeshion]"

In an instant, numerous crimson petals appeared around him.

Carried by the wind, they flew towards me, covering my field of vision with petals.

Red petals, crackling with tiny sparks, filled the air.

I thought there was some kind of mechanism to it, and in the next moment, a petal that fell in front of me burst with intense light and explosive force.

As if triggering a chain reaction, the other petals exploded one after another, with a continuous burst of light and blasts assaulting me.

It was a powerful fire-based magic.

Perhaps due to his high magic power value, or maybe because his affinity for magic elements was fire with the red gem attached to his staff.

Magicians are known to prefer magic catalysts such as staves and ornaments decorated with gemstones, as they slightly enhance the power of magic when used. I don't have one since they're expensive.

Perhaps due to that, Kaien's "bursting petals" transformed into a magic spell with considerable power.

But well...

"What...? No damage?"

It had no effect on me whatsoever.

As the blast subsided, Kaien furrowed his brows in astonishment as he saw me, completely unscathed, with not even a speck of dirt on my uniform.

The students in the spectator seats were also murmuring in confusion. They had thought that this last move would definitely decide the outcome.

But unfortunately for them, his magic couldn't even soil my uniform.

"Tch, did I hold back too much? I don't really understand the magic power of commoners, and the durability of their magical garments is ambiguous, so I have to be cautious," Kaien said with a rather feeble excuse.

Letting out a sigh of exasperation, he swept his red bangs back and chuckled.

“Well then, from here on, I’ll go a bit stronger.”

Once again, he pointed the tip of his staff towards me and began another incantation.

“[The enemy is right here——Crimson Blaze——Gather the magic into a single sphere and pierce through].”

This was a familiar incantation.

It was one of the basic offensive spells, where the destructive power is prominently displayed based on the user’s magic power.

And since it was a fire-based magic, it should be one of Kaien’s specialties as a holder of red magic affinity.

“[Burning Sphere——Flame Sphere]!”

From the tip of his poised staff, a fireball as tall as a person was launched.

Just by looking at it, you could tell that it had considerable destructive power due to the match of magic power value and color.

The students in the spectator seats gasped in admiration at Kaien’s “[Burning Sphere——Flame Sphere].”

But even such a powerful magic...

“It’s futile.”

Right before it could make contact with my body, it was blocked by an invisible barrier.

“W-What?!”

Once again, not a speck of dirt touched my uniform.

Finally, Kaien began to suspect something unusual, casting a sharp gaze in my direction.

“What the hell did you do...”

“Well, what could it be? Maybe you should think for yourself a little,” I replied with a faint smile, mocking him.

There was no obligation for me to kindly explain.

His face contorted in annoyance as he infused his anger into his magic, reciting the same incantation forcefully and pointing his staff towards me.

“[Burning Sphere—Flame Sphere]!”

Once again, a massive fireball was launched.

But like before, it never reached me. Just before impact, it was mysteriously nullified, as if blocked by an invisible wall.

“What... what’s happening...”

Kaien muttered in astonishment, his voice hoarse.

The students in the audience, as well as Professor Lezan in the referee’s seat, were frozen in surprise.

Well, it's natural for everyone to be surprised since no one would know such a minor spell.

I thought it would be entertaining to watch him continue his futile attempts while laughing, but since there was no time left until the first class, it was time to settle things.

"Doing this any further would be a waste of time... but since you won't listen, I have no choice but to tell you."

"Huh?"

"The spell I first used is 'Protective Magic.' And not just any protective magic, but a magic that 'completely nullifies' magical attacks."

I explained it as clearly and concisely as possible.

However, it seemed insufficient for those who knew nothing about it, as everyone had a bewildered expression on their faces.

Kaien also furrowed his brow in confusion.

"Nullify magic completely? I've never heard of such magic. Are you just making up some random story?"

"It's not a lie. In fact, none of your magic affects me. That's the best proof."

"Then why hasn't anyone heard of such magic? It's strange that no one is using a magic that nullifies magic!"

"No one would use it. After all, this magic only succeeds about once in a hundred thousand attempts."

“...Huh?”

The atmosphere suddenly fell silent.

It didn't feel like a training ground where many students were gathered.

Everyone was frozen, speechless, as if they couldn't believe their own ears.

I was the one to break the silence.

“For thirty minutes after activation, there's a one-in-a-hundred-thousand chance that magic attacks will be completely nullified by a magic called 'Aegis Freide of Momentary Peace.' That's why normal magicians using it won't achieve anything, and no one would bother using such a worthless magic.”

“Then... why do you...?”

Kaien's face clearly showed that magic had no effect on him.

If it only succeeded once in a hundred thousand attempts, he didn't seem to understand why all the magic had been nullified since earlier.

As if waiting for those words, I answered with a slightly smug tone.

“With my luck value of 999, I can perfectly block magic every time. Do you understand now?”

“Luck value... 999...?”

Luck value, an existence that meant nothing to magicians – that was the common understanding and could be considered common sense in this magical academy.

Luck value was useless in every sense. That was the reason why I had been mistreated by my family.

But luck value held such great potential, an important talent for magicians.

Everyone present in this place was seeing the usefulness of luck value with their own eyes, and they were deeply shaken.

“If you surrender gracefully, I won’t do anything further.”

“—!”

As I said that, almost as if advising him, Kaien’s temples bulged, and he raised his voice in anger.

Chapter 22

Me with a Luck Value of 999...

“【Hesitate not——Scorching Meteor——Incinerate to the Core】
——【Little Sun, Little Flare】!”

A massive fireball, surpassing the previous one, shot out from his raised staff.

An intermediate fire-based magic spell——【Little Sun, Little Flare】.

This spell was essentially an upgraded version of the 【Burning Sphere, Flame Sphere】.

Due to its excessively high destructive power, it was usually avoided in mock battles.

Moreover, considering Kaien’s high magical power and being a Red Mage with affinity for fire magic, it wouldn’t be surprising if it possessed an unfair level of potency.

As expected, the large fireball unleashed by Kaien had the size and heat just on the verge of being unfair.

Small gasps arose from the audience. Murmurs spread. Even Professor Rezan from the judging panel leaned forward.

However...

“Alright...”

With a mere wave of my right hand, I effortlessly extinguished the massive fireball.

“What...!?”

Kaien remained frozen, his eyes widened in astonishment, still holding his staff.

He seemed to have considerable confidence in his attack just now, but it was all in vain.

The effect of 【Momentary Peace, Aegis Freeze】 activated just before it could touch me, rendering the magic ineffective.

It was highly unlikely that any magic could break through this protective spell.

With a condition that it only activates once in every hundred thousand attempts, I had flawlessly defended even Mulburry-san's full-powered strike.

It was inconceivable for someone like him, a mere student, even if he came from a prestigious family of magicians, to be able to overcome it.

“That's why I told you it's futile. Well, it seems I can't just beat you without proper measures,” I remarked.

Step by step, I slowly approached Kaien.

To intentionally instill a sense of despair, I deepened my wicked smile as I drew closer.

“From here to your position, it's about twenty steps. I won't do anything during that time, so go ahead and try your best to stop me with your magic,” I taunted.

“Don't you dare underestimate me, you worthless commoner!” Kaien

seethed with anger, swinging his staff as if turning his emotions into flames.

“【Intense Blaze, Karman Vague】!”

A magic that conjured waves of fire.

“【Inferno Vortex, Gruna Tornado】!”

A magic that enclosed in a whirlwind of flames.

“【Twilight Congregation, Torpo Flame】!”

A magic that sent swarms of fiery birds, and so on.

A variety of fire-based magic spells relentlessly unleashed, without giving me a moment's respite.

However, none of them could touch me, as they were nullified just before making contact.

“Oh dear, are you sure that's working for you? I'm completely unaffected, you know. Come on, come closer,” I teased.

“Kuh... Damn it...!”

Kaien's face was filled with humiliation as he distanced himself from me.

The training ground was spacious enough for him to evade if he wished, but perhaps his pride wouldn't allow him to do so, as he only took a slight step back before coming to a halt.

Retreating any further would result in a clear defeat regardless of the outcome of the mock battle. That must have been his judgment.

While noble arrogance was quite sturdy, there was little chance of the tide turning even if he held out.

Just as I thought that...

“If magic won’t work, how about this?” Kaien said with a triumphant smile.

He raised his staff high towards the sky and began incanting.

“【Manifest——Alluring Undying Phoenix——Incinerate the Entirety of Heaven and Earth】.”

Upon hearing that incantation, Professor Rezan was the first to gasp.

Reflexively, he rose from his seat on the judging panel, as if about to shout.

However, he stopped just before doing so, wearing a conflicted expression and freezing in place.

It seemed he was uncertain about whether his intervention was appropriate.

The reason for his hesitation became apparent shortly after.

“【Annihilating Immortal Phoenix, Flare Phoenix】!”

Once Kaien finished his incantation, a large magic circle unfolded before him.

The magic circle emitted a crimson flash and gathered particles of light at its center.

These particles gradually took shape, eventually forming something

resembling a “giant bird.”

It was a bird engulfed in flames, its entire body ablaze. Its head reached the second floor of the audience seats, and standing in front of it was enough to feel an intense heat.

“Kiiii!”

The flaming bird let out a cry that shook the air, causing a commotion in the arena.

It was not merely a fire-based magic spell in the shape of a bird.

It was an actual living being with its own will. There was no doubt about it...

“Oh, summoning magic, huh? Quite reckless of you,” I remarked.

I had learned about it from Mulburry-san.

There was a type of magic called “Summoning Magic,” which involved separating one’s own magical essence to create a pseudo-magical beast.

It was a powerful magic, but it came with significant risks.

Unlike regular magic, it involved detaching one’s magical essence, which could severely damage the user’s magical energy.

It was said that over time, the user’s magical energy would have difficulty recovering, and in the worst case, a large amount of magical energy would become unusable.

There were even magicians who became unable to use magic for their entire lives due to repeatedly using summoning magic.

Such a dangerous magic. However, in this situation, it could be considered the best option.

My 【Momentary Peace, Aegis Freeze】 could only defend against attacks from magic, not physical attacks.

Certainly, if the attack came from the summoned beast, it would pose no problem for me.

He could have chosen to come at me with physical attacks enhanced by body strengthening magic, but he probably chose summoning magic because he feared getting close to me.

Moreover, this summoned beast was quite powerful. It was something rarely seen even in mock battles between students.

Still, Professor Rezan didn't intervene. Perhaps it was because summoned beasts, unlike regular magical beasts, could be controlled and their power could be adjusted by their master.

Well, considering how this guy had lost himself in anger, it was questionable whether he would exercise any restraint.

“Hah! There's no way I would lose to a mere commoner! Don't get carried away, you inferior race! Just because you managed to enter this grade doesn't mean you can stand on the same stage as me!”

Kaien became quite arrogant in front of the summoned beast.

Regaining his confident smile from before the mock battle, he let out a mocking laugh.

“You, you're just an unwanted presence in this academy! You're no different from that pathetic crybaby who sobbed!

Crying so pathetically just because a trinket was broken! Weaklings

like you have no talent to become a mage! I'll make sure to drive you out of this academy along with the rest of your kind!"

As if responding to his words, the magnificent flaming bird spread its wings.

Then, with great force, it took off towards the ceiling of the training ground.

Sparks of fire scattered from its wings, eliciting small screams from the students in the audience seats.

While gazing up at the flaming bird, I quietly pondered.

I still believed that Mil's heart was fragile. It was true that she lacked many qualities as a mage.

However, she possessed extraordinary talent and a kind heart that more than made up for those shortcomings.

To simply judge her as lacking talent without understanding any of that, it showed that this man had no qualities worth mentioning.

Insulting my friend, making her cry in front of everyone—I would make him deeply regret his actions.

"If it's a magical beast we're dealing with, then I can use this, right?"

I slowly opened my right hand and directed it towards the flaming bird.

With a gentle smile and the familiar words on my lips, I smoothly recited the incantation.

“【Life or death——Grim Reaper's Scythe——Reap the enemy's head

in a single thought】.”

The blazing monstrous bird glared at me and swiftly descended with incredible speed.

Kaien wore a triumphant smile.

Professor Rezan widened his eyes.

The students in the audience gasped.

Amidst all this, I remained completely unfazed...

I hung the grim reaper's scythe around the neck of the monstrous bird.

“【Devil's Message, Death Notice】.”

A jet-black light flickered from my right hand.

The same colored light enveloped the fiery bird of calamity.

In an instant, the summoned beast, now engulfed in ominous light, thrashed and struggled in the air.

“Kiiii! Kiiii!”

Eventually, it seemed to lose its ability to fly and weakly descended to the ground.

Afterward, without uttering a scream, it quietly dissolved into the air as if melting away.

Silence descended upon the training ground.

The students in the audience were left dumbfounded, and even Professor Rezan was at a loss for words.

Kaien stared in disbelief, his gaze fixed on the spot where the summoned beast had vanished.

“W-What... my summoned beast... defeated in a single strike...”

As the summoned beast was merely a pseudo-body created through magic, it was designed not to leave behind any physical remains upon its demise.

Conversely, the disappearance of the summoned beast meant one thing—it had undoubtedly lost its life.

That’s why Kaien was bewildered. He had witnessed a magic he had never seen or heard of before, and his prized summoned beast had been defeated in a single blow.

“W-What the... who the hell are you?”

Kaien, now no longer skeptical but rather filled with awe, directed his gaze at me.

Unperturbed, I approached him.

“【The die is cast——Guidance of the gods——If you have a grudge, blame your own fate】.”

I stopped right in front of him and calmly extended my right hand.

Perhaps recalling the sight of the defeated summoned beast, Kaien trembled, his lips quivering as he let out a shout.

“What the hell are youuuuuuuu!!!”

Without answering, I put an end to it all.

“【Fickle Fate, Fortuna】.”

In an instant, a yellow light flickered from my right hand.

Kaien's entire body was enveloped in the same colored light, and he collapsed to the ground.

His body convulsed, and he remained motionless, unable to make a single move.

“That's it, it's over. Make sure to come and apologize to Mil properly. If not, I'll make you suffer even more,” I said, lowering my voice, and confidently strode across the silent training ground as if it were mine.

No one said a word. Not a single sound. Only the sound of my footsteps echoed through the air.

As I passed by the judging panel, Professor Rezan finally came to his senses and observed Kaien's condition.

With Kaien completely immobilized, Professor Rezan proclaimed in a resolute voice, “Th-The winner... Sachi Marmelard!”

At that moment, the students in the audience, albeit belatedly, had a sudden realization.

They alternated their gazes between the fallen Kaien and me, slowly grasping the situation.

Gradually, feeble applause, “Clap... Clap...” filled with exhaustion and hesitation, could be heard sporadically from various places. It seemed like they were finding it difficult to offer straightforward congratulations.

Perhaps it was because I was an unknown commoner.

In a mock battle where everyone expected Kaien to emerge as the clear victor, he was overwhelmingly defeated instead.

Undoubtedly, this had caused confusion among everyone.

Or maybe they were concerned that this would only boost the confidence of a commoner like me, rather than offering praise.

Well, it didn't really matter. I did it to make Kaien apologize to Mil. I didn't fight to earn recognition for my abilities.

Besides, through this mock battle, I had come to realize a few things. I was quite strong, for one.

I also had a tendency to be persistent and malicious.

And there were important lessons about how to gauge an opponent and the significance of battles with magicians.

Oh, and well...

I learned that nothing makes me angrier than someone insulting my friend.

With a refreshing feeling, I walked toward the exit where my friend was waiting.

T/N: I feel most authors, especially Japanese authors, allow such people to get off easy in their stories. I feel the punishment should be severe for them, for example expulsion or having to remake the necklace by the person that made it and until then you cannot return to the academy which he never can because the person that made this is dead.

I don't know, maybe it's just me.

Chapter 24

I Am Very Happy to Have Friends

I deeply apologize for the disrespectful act I committed. I forcefully took the request form and I am truly sorry for that. I will cover the compensation for the pendant I broke and return the request form as stated. I will make efforts to improve my behavior to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future. Therefore, I sincerely ask for your forgiveness.

During the lunch break, Kaien visited the classroom and delivered this standardized apology in a monotone voice.

He unilaterally handed over the compensation for the pendant and quickly left the classroom as if fleeing.

It was truly a ridiculous apology.

But well, maybe it was good enough that I could make that idiot apologize, even if it was just for appearances.

Mil had a face that seemed to say it was sufficient, so I considered the matter closed.

I didn't feel bad either, so I think it was good that I challenged Kaien to a mock battle at that time.

However...

The real difficulty came afterward.

"Did that commoner really defeat Kaien Chifonard?"

"Yeah, I saw it this morning for sure. She used some unheard-of magic

to overwhelm Kaien.”

...

Rumors about the first-year student who defeated Kaien in a mock battle spread quickly.

The students in the class stared at me with even more curiosity than usual.

It's uncomfortable.

And during the short break between classes, students from other classes even came to the classroom and stared at me as if scrutinizing.

I guess it's inevitable to attract attention, but why do they give me such hostile gazes?

Is it really unpleasant to have commoners in the spotlight? Is that so?

And during the lunch break, I didn't feel alive at all.

“That commoner who defeated Kaien, isn't that her?”

“Did Kaien really lose to such a plain-looking girl?”

...

When I tried to have lunch in the cafeteria, I was met with searching gazes from every corner as soon as I entered.

The school cafeteria is open to students from all grades, so the gazes were far more numerous than in the classroom.

In the end, I fled from the cafeteria with Mil.

“I can’t even have a decent lunch like this...”

“Indeed.”

After leaving the cafeteria, we aimlessly wandered the hallway with nothing to do.

We considered buying something from the school store and finding a place to settle down and have lunch, but the store was also incredibly crowded, so we gave up on that idea.

If things continued like this, we would end up skipping lunch and attending the afternoon classes empty-stomached.

A serious situation indeed.

While thinking about what to do, we absentmindedly walked down the hallway, and eventually, we passed by the request reception area.

Since it was lunchtime, there weren’t many people there.

Typically, large-scale requests are introduced after school, so there’s no need to visit during lunchtime.

But since we’re here anyway, let’s just take a quick look. Well, as commoners, the requests we can get are probably limited anyway.

With that thought in mind, I approached the reception window and the receptionist girl who had helped me before was standing there.

Without expecting much, I requested her to introduce some requests, and she immediately took out the request forms.

“Here are the school requests currently available for introduction.”

“Hmm?”

I wondered if I was seeing things.

There were eight request forms, to my surprise.

Last time I came, there were only two.

“Why are there suddenly so many requests available for introduction?”

“I apologize for the impolite response the other day. I heard that you won against Kaien Chifonard in a mock battle, so I have been instructed to treat you on par with the nobles, even without a family emblem.”

“U-Understood...”

Talk about a complete change of attitude.

No, this receptionist girl didn't mean any harm.

It's just part of her job, as a matter of responsibility, to treat things this way. But deep down, I'm sure she wants to introduce requests equally to everyone.

And this time, since I defeated Kaien, who could be considered the most powerful first-year, she felt at ease introducing the requests to me without any reservations.

I never expected such a byproduct to come out of that mock battle.

Oddly enough, it turned out to be a perfect stage to showcase my abilities.

“Then, um, I’ll take these two, please.”

“Of course, I’ll take care of it.”

The receptionist girl smiled and processed the paperwork for me.

“I never thought we’d be able to resolve the issue of social status in this way.”

“...Indeed.”

I sat on a bench in the courtyard, absentmindedly gazing at the accepted request forms.

The conditions are good, and the requests seem moderately challenging.

“With this, we won’t have to worry about accumulating points for exterminations anymore. From now on, we can take on numerous school requests, and we’ll quickly reach our target grades, won’t we?”

“...Indeed.”

I furrowed my brow as I noticed Mil’s reaction, or rather, the lack thereof.

I just realized that Mil has been giving me similar responses since earlier.

“What’s wrong, Mil? Your energy seems unusually low. Are you acting distant or something?”

“...?”

Mil seemed different from usual, somehow awkward in his responses.

She's also sitting away from me, creating a distance between us. Why is she avoiding me like this?

"Um...! I know it's late to say this, but thank you so much for fighting in my place against that noble...!"

"Huh?"

"In my place, you fought against that noble... Thank you so much...!"

Ah, now that she mentions it, I haven't been thanked yet. It occurred to me belatedly.

It's not like I need that, but it seems like Mil has been waiting for the right moment to say it.

In fact, that's why she's been acting distant since earlier because she didn't know how to approach the situation.

"Look, you can just act as usual. Besides, there's no need to feel indebted or anything. I'll say it again, that fight was my fault to begin with."

"Just... as usual..."

I guess I had a slightly awkward conversation with her when we briefly talked before the mock battle.

She's been acting strange since then, hasn't she?

"I don't need special treatment just because I won that battle. So, no need to worry about it."

"...As usual."

I pat Mil's head lightly to ease her tension, and she looks up at me with a slightly relieved expression.

After that, we spend some time discussing the accepted requests and planning our future actions. The awkwardness between us gradually dissipates as we focus on the tasks at hand.

It seemed like Mil had found relief upon hearing that. Perhaps she was worried that I was bothered by her cold attitude.

And then, Mil returned to her usual demeanor and said:

“Indeed, Sachiko-san, you're amazing. It's not just that you won against that noble in the mock battle. Despite being at a disadvantage as a commoner, you have undeniably demonstrated your abilities and are slowly gaining recognition. It's quite different from me.”

Mil had a faint self-deprecating smile.

I don't really think I'm anything special.

I tend to act impulsively and emotionally, and it just happened to lead to good results.

It's all because of good luck that things are somehow working out.

The amazing one here is not me; it's probably my luck stat.

However, I couldn't dismiss Mil's praise. I accepted it sincerely and returned the sentiment:

“I think Mil is amazing too.”

“Huh?”

“You stood up to that Kaien person and spoke your mind. Despite

being scared, you protected the request form because you wanted to take it on with me. I know all about it.”

Mil’s vacant eyes were fixed on me.

Eventually, she quietly smiled, and I could tell that she was secretly clenching her fist, pleased to be praised.

I’ll make sure to acknowledge Mil’s efforts. I’m grateful that she protected the request form for my sake, and it made me really happy.

With my luck stat at 999, I’m truly blessed to have friends as well.

Through this incident, I feel like we’ve made progress in various ways.

We managed to avoid a situation where I would be expelled early, and it seems there won’t be any issues with our future grades.

As for the immediate challenge, it would be making friends, but that still seems difficult. Considering Mil’s unfortunate disposition as well.

Well, being alone with Mil is enjoyable enough for now.

But someday, when Mil accepts her own unlucky disposition and finds someone who accepts and embraces it, I hope we can all get along together.

Since it’s a precious school life, it’s better to have many friends, right?

As if in agreement with that sentiment, our gazes met, and we both burst into laughter.

End of part 1.

Attention

The sound of sand crunching underfoot resonates.

A sweltering heat surrounds and envelops my entire body.

Just as I thought the wind was blowing, the gentle breeze exposed to the heat turns into a scorching gust that passes by.

I look around, hoping to find a cooler place, but unfortunately, there is nothing but sand in the surroundings.

Golden sand stretches to the horizon, and the sun's reflection is starting to hurt my eyes.

In such a harsh environment, Mil and I are battling a “mass of rocks.”

“Groooooaaah!!!”

The roar, resembling the sound of grinding stones together, comes from a beast that looks like a pile of rocks—a Rock Golem.

This violent beast, known as the “Golden Desert Golem,” appears in this “Golden Sands” and immediately attacks anyone it sees.

Rumor has it that it strongly yearns for a flesh-filled body and launches attacks to take over the physical forms of its victims.

So, are these creatures in front of us attacking us out of envy for our bodies?

As I vaguely pondered such thoughts, I heard Mil's voice next to me.

“Icebound Land of Niflheim!”

In response to her voice, a burst of cold air emanates from her feet, creating ice on the golden desert.

Soon, the ice races across the ground like lightning, entangling the feet of the Rock Golem standing there.

With the sound of crackling ice, the body of the Rock Golem quickly freezes.

“G...Goooh!”

Although it would probably be settled with Mil’s ice magic alone, I don’t want to spend too much time in this heat.

To finish it quickly, I raise my right hand and...

“Life or death—Grim Reaper’s Scythe—Reap the enemy’s head with a single thought.”

I activate instant death magic.

“Death’s Notice.”

A suspicious black light radiates from my right hand, faintly staining the Rock Golem’s body black.

Suddenly, the Rock Golem, which was twisting to free itself from the ice, stops abruptly.

“G...Goooh...”

The feeble voice escaping from the Rock Golem is its last, and its rocky body crumbles to pieces.

In the blink of an eye, it turns into multiple chunks of rock, and a

momentary silence envelops the area.

I glance briefly at Mil beside me, who also turns to me at the same time, smiling with relief.

And we congratulate each other, happy that we have successfully defeated the magical beast.

It has been a month since we enrolled in the Royal Harvest Academy of Magic.

As students of the magical academy, Mil and I dedicate ourselves to the study of magic every day.

I'm not particularly good at studying, but I enjoy learning about magic, so it's not too much of a struggle.

However, achieving the goal of graduating and becoming a national mage seems to be quite a challenging path.

That's because the magic academy has various quotas and exams, and if you can't overcome these obstacles, you'll be expelled without mercy.

The sieve-like period is approaching in two months, which is the end-of-term exam, and Mil and I are completing the academy missions we've taken on like this.

To take the end-of-term exam, we need to earn 100 points from defeating magical beasts by the end of the semester.

It's only possible to earn these points by undertaking missions to defeat magical beasts.

Well, if we make use of holidays like today, we can complete three missions in a day, so we can earn a considerable amount of points.

“With this, we’ve probably earned around 70 points, right?”

“Yes, I think we’re fine.”

We take out the mission sheet and reread the details.

[Rock Golem Extermination]

Location: Golden Desert (Kogane Sabaku)

Target Quantity: 5

Reward: 10,000 ruushi

Extermination Points: 10

Difficulty: C

Upon reconfirming the mission details, I couldn’t help but let out a long sigh.

“Just 10 points for this mission, even if we split it, it’s only 5 points. It makes me nostalgic for the times when we climbed mountains and worked hard to chase away birds for just 1 point.”

“But that was just last month.”

Mil and I were born as commoners, so we didn’t have much credibility compared to the noble students. As a result, we hardly received any recommended academy missions and could only take on low-level missions with low scores.

However, now we’re able to receive somewhat decent missions and referrals.

It’s all thanks to me...

“I have nothing but gratitude for Sachi-san, who changed our

situation. If it hadn't been for you, I'm sure we wouldn't have reached the target points."

Just recently, I duelled with a boy from another class. He was a prominent magician from the renowned magician family called Kaien, and even as a first-year, he was one of the top performers. By defeating him, I gained a bit of recognition and started receiving missions and referrals like the other students. It was an unexpected stroke of luck. I never thought that the duel would resolve our issue with earning enough points.

But this is not solely my achievement.

"It's not just me, but Mil also worked incredibly hard."

"Huh?"

"Mil went to take on the missions for me, and that led to the argument with that pampered aristocrat. If it weren't for that, we probably wouldn't have had a mock battle in the first place, so this is also thanks to Mil."

"...?"

As I conveyed that again, Mil smiled with a sense of relief.

So, in this way, the two of us strive together towards graduation.

Today, we have successfully completed the extermination mission and taken another steady step toward graduation.

"By the way, why are the missions located in such hot and remote places? It's sweaty and uncomfortable."

I sighed, fluttering the collar of my uniform.

Doing magical beast extermination in a place like this feels like it's not benefiting anyone.

As I thought that, Mil proudly explained with a hint of pride.

“Caravans from neighboring countries pass through this Golden Desert. If dangerous magical beasts aren't exterminated, the caravans could be attacked, and valuable goods won't be able to be imported.”

Now that she mentioned it, I vaguely remembered hearing something like that from the receptionist.

I haven't been paying much attention to the details of the missions, so it slipped my mind.

Ensuring the safety of such remote places is also important.

“Speaking of which, it was Sachi-san who said we should take on this mission, right? Even though we were being referred to various other extermination missions, why did you specifically choose this location?”

“Well, I didn't know the Golden Desert would be this hot, you know? And the reward and the number of points were tempting, but above all, it was the receptionist...”

As I began to explain, Mil nodded in understanding.

“Yeah, she did seem really troubled. I think initially, other students were taking on this mission, but they failed to defeat the Rock Golems and ended up abandoning it.”

Failing to complete a mission not only falls on the students but also puts responsibility on the receptionists. In fact, the penalties for the receptionists might be even more severe. That's why they carefully assess the students' abilities and recommend suitable missions.

The receptionist with the straight bangs, who had failed once before, seemed to be in a state of deep despair, so I took on the mission to help her out.

“You’re really kind, Sachi-san.”

“Nah, I think I’m just easily swayed.”

We exchanged such words as we made our way back.

Since we had successfully completed the extermination mission, we should return to the academy as soon as possible and report. Or so I thought...

“But anyway, it’s time for dinner, right? Sachi-chan seems tired, so I feel like we should have a hearty meal.....”

“Wait, where’s Mil?”

Mil, who was supposed to be next to me, had disappeared without a trace. Even when I looked around, I couldn’t find her anywhere. There couldn’t possibly be a hiding spot in such an open area, so I furrowed my eyebrows and tilted my head.

Where did she go?

“W-What is this?!”

“Hmm?”

Suddenly, a voice came from my left rear, and I instinctively turned around. However, there was no one there, just the golden desert stretching to the horizon.

Or so I thought, but as I walked a little closer in that direction, I noticed that the ground there had unnaturally sunk. The sand sank

deeper and deeper in a reverse conical shape. Within it, Mil was flailing her arms as if drowning, desperately trying to crawl back up to the surface.

“I-I’m being sucked in!”

As I looked, I could see a strange fish-like face at the center of the sinking ground. I vaguely remembered the receptionist saying that there were giant fish swimming in the sand in this Golden Desert. They could swallow both the sand and creatures on the surface whole. They were particularly dangerous magical beasts that required special caution.

But recently, they rarely appeared, and the chance of encountering one was extremely low, or so I was told. Yet, somehow, it had managed to lurk right under Mil.

And now, except for me, Mil alone had been swallowed by the sand hell.

She really has no luck.

“Mil’s magic can defeat it in one shot. Hurry up and defeat it and come back up!”

“I-I... Sand is entering my mouth, so I can’t chant properly...”

It seemed like it would take some time.

Thinking that, I quickly aimed my right hand at the giant fish and chanted rapidly.

“Life or death—Grim Reaper’s Scythe—Reap the enemy’s head with a single thought—Death’s Ominous Notice!”

Just like with the Rock Golem earlier, black light emanated from the fish, and the sand hell immediately came to a halt.

Upon checking, the giant fish had its mouth wide open toward the sky, already lifeless and petrified.

Soon, Mil crawled out from the sand hell, barely catching her breath, and lowered her head.

“I-I’m saved! Thank you so much!”

“You’re still as unlucky as ever, Mil. It makes me nervous just watching.”

Accidents like this happen every time without fail. It’s probably all thanks to Mil’s luck score of zero. How many times have I seen her teary-eyed?

“On the other hand, Sachi-san is really amazing. Despite being with unlucky me all the time, you never get caught up in any of it.”

“Well, uh... That’s...”

I confidently stated something that was already obvious, for no particular reason.

“Because I have a luck score of 999.”

Even if I’m with the unlucky Mil, I’ll never experience misfortune. Good things happen to me on a daily basis, and I never get injured or sick. And as I just mentioned, my “Instant Death Magic” always succeeds.

After saying such a pointless thing, I suddenly had an idea and proposed it.

“Ah, then how about we hold hands from now on? Maybe that way, Mil won’t be caught up in any misfortune.”

“...Even so, I still feel like I’ll be the only one who trips and gets injured. Plus, it’s kind of embarrassing, so I’ll pass.”

As I said such absurd things, we finally started our journey back.

The next morning.

The holiday was over, and it was a school day. We, as usual, left the dormitory and headed to school. And we immediately made our way to the reception desk to report yesterday’s mission to exterminate the Rock Golem.

There was a small red glowing rock among the collapsed parts of the Rock Golem’s body, which served as proof of extermination. When we presented it, the receptionist with the straight bangs expressed her gratitude.

It seemed that if we had failed another mission, we would have faced even greater penalties. Thanks to that, the trust in us seemed to have grown stronger, and we were given even better mission recommendations.

As I thought about how fortunate we were this morning, Mil and I headed towards the classroom. While walking down the hallway, I noticed some lingering gazes.

“Hey, isn’t that the commoner from the first-year who had the mock battle?”

“...The one who fought against the noble’s son?”

“...”

I glanced in the direction of the voices and saw two male students. Their uniforms had green accents. It seemed that the story of my

battle against Kaien had spread to students in other grades as well.

It's annoying to be stared at like this. I thought as I walked confidently down the hallway. Mil, who was next to me, smiled wryly and spoke.

"You've become quite famous, Sachi-san."

"...Yeah."

I couldn't help but let out a dry laugh. I didn't want unnecessary attention. It seemed like everyone wasn't too pleased with the commoners receiving attention.

And...

"I never thought this attention would last for a whole month. I thought it would settle down relatively quickly..."

Since the mock battle against Kaien, I had been constantly subjected to these indescribable gazes for a month. Well, it had only been a month since I enrolled, and there hadn't been any other notable events, so that might be why.

"It will probably settle down soon. As we approach the end-of-term exams, classes will become more challenging, and everyone will be preoccupied with their own affairs."

"I hope so..."

As long as we were commoners in this academy where only noble sons and daughters attended, we would inevitably stand out. I hoped for the day when we could naturally blend in at this academy. Despite starting the morning in high spirits, I felt a bit melancholic as we reached the classroom.

Soon, it was time for the morning assembly, and Professor Lezan

arrived. Unexpectedly, she conveyed something to us.

“There will be ‘Physical Measurements’ tomorrow, so make sure to be in perfect condition.”

“Physical measurements?”

Upon hearing the announcement, Mil beside me trembled. I glanced at her, and she had a pale face as if it were the end of the world, pressing her own chest.

Chapter 26

Physical measurements

“Huff... huff... huff...”

“...Um, Mil-san?”

Inside the dormitory of the magic academy, where I live as a student, the intense groaning of my roommate echoes through the room.

I look towards the source of the sound, and there I see Mil, a girl with blue hair, lying face down on the floor, propping herself up with both hands.

And she's desperately trying to lift her body using her arms.

“Pant... pant... pant...”

“Why have you been trying to do push-ups when you can't even do one?”

As I question her, Mil finally collapses with a thud.

Gasping for breath, she looks up at me with teary eyes.

It seems like she's been attempting push-ups, but she hasn't been able to do a single one.

She just plants her hands on the ground and shakes her arms, making her upper arms tremble.

Why did she suddenly become so obsessed with strengthening her muscles?

“Because... there’s a ‘physical measurement’ tomorrow.”

“That doesn’t really answer my question, does it?”

Normally, wouldn’t you focus on doing push-ups when there’s a physical measurement? It’s just a measurement of height and weight, so building arm muscles wouldn’t make a difference, right?

Or maybe she thinks she can magically develop muscles overnight.

“Is it because you’re concerned about your weight? If you want to lose weight, wouldn’t running be a better option?”

“If I lose any more weight, I’ll just become skin and bones. No, um, it’s not about my weight...”

Mil suddenly becomes downcast and starts rubbing her chest.

Yes, for a girl her age, she has a modest, cute chest.

“Huh, there? That’s what you’re concerned about?”

“Isn’t it the most pitiful-looking part of me?”

She stands up abruptly, seemingly forgetting about the fatigue from the push-ups, and starts stomping her feet in frustration.

She doesn’t need to get so worked up over it.

I don’t think it’s pitiful at all.

“Um, so you’ve been trying to do push-ups because your chest size will be measured during the physical measurement tomorrow, and you want it to appear slightly larger?”

“Yes, exactly. But please don’t compare it to a balloon.”

But does she really want to make it inflate like a balloon? Mil starts exhaling onto her chest.

It’s somewhat touching.

I don’t want her to make me feel any sadder than I already am.

“I see, so you’ve been pushing yourself with push-ups for that reason. But does it really make your chest bigger?”

“I-I don’t know. I’ve just faintly heard something about it somewhere...”

Well, I guess that’s true.

If push-ups alone could truly enhance breast size, then all women struggling with their chest sizes would have disappeared from this world.

However, Mil seems to have no other option to cling to, so she once again tries to do push-ups, placing her hands on the floor.

But just like before, she fails to do even one and collapses.

Showing a sulking expression, she puffs up her cheeks.

“On that note, Sachi-san is so lucky. She has such a great figure.”

“Huh, really?”

“I’ve never been told that before.”

I wonder if my physique is considered to have a good figure?

I look down at my arms, chest, and stomach, but I don't really feel a sense of reality.

"You don't have any excess fat, your stomach is nice and flat, and your breasts are a good size. You also have a healthy skin tone. You're not too tall or too short, everything is just right!"

"You don't have to passionately argue like that."

Or rather, it's embarrassing to have my body discussed in such detail. As Mil stares at me, I instinctively squirm.

Then, Mil averts her gaze from my body and looks down at herself with drooped shoulders.

"Compared to me, I don't have much flesh, and even though I'm not binding my chest, it's flat. It's probably all because of my luck value of zero. Because of my luck value of zero, I have this childlike figure..."

"That would mean it's strange that I'm not a super busty beauty, right?"

Mil is saying something nonsensical in front of me, who has a luck value of 999. If proportions change based on luck value, then it wouldn't make sense for me not to be one of the world's leading busty beauties.

I try to refute with sound reasoning, but Mil shakes her head and denies it.

"Perhaps Sachi-san's chest is the truly strongest chest. Not too big, not too small, but a size that can attract the attention of men to some extent and doesn't hinder daily life. Yes, that's the ultimate chest of luck value 999."

"You're saying that with such a serious face..."

Well, it seems to be important to Mil, and she starts clinging to the prayer beads and bracelets wrapped around her wrists.

She wants to make it bigger to that extent.

I think it's fine the way it is, though...

"Anyway, I'll do whatever it takes to make my breasts even slightly bigger by tomorrow. I'm determined to do everything I can."

"Hmm, so what specifically are you going to do?"

While hoping she won't do anything too extreme, I ask her.

Then Mil starts pondering, placing her hand on her chin and squeezing out ideas.

"For dinner, I'll try to consume as many dairy products as possible, and in the bath, I want to try the massages I know of.

Also, I'll go to bed as early as possible today and be in the best condition for the physical measurement."

Well, there isn't much else we can do, is there?

If it gives Mil even a little peace of mind, I definitely want her to give it her all.

Quietly cheering her on, Mil unexpectedly glances at me.

"Oh, and I remember hearing that having someone massage you can make them grow..."

...

I can guess what she's trying to say.

She probably wants me to try massaging her. If it were the usual Mil, she would be too embarrassed and avoid excessive physical contact.

But now, it seems she has forgotten about her sense of shame, indicating that she's quite desperate.

It's not like her usual self.

In the first place, it's impossible to make them bigger overnight, and it's unlike Mil to still hold onto that hope.

Let me wake her up as a friend.

I spread both my hands wide and strike a bear-like pose.

"Alright, then let me knead you like pickles! Even if you burst, I won't mind!"

"N-No, that's rejected!"

Oh well, I wanted to try an all-nighter for her sake.

The next day.

As Professor Lezan said, there was a general physical measurement for all grade levels.

The official purpose seems to be simply to assess the students' physical and mental states, but rumors say that they provide information to an institution that studies mage bodies.

In return, they receive research results and information on magical beast ecology and such. I can't imagine what kind of research would use that information.

In any case, we measured our height, weight, and other numbers in order.

Among them, the students each showed their joy or sadness, and Mil's face turned pale as she looked at her own results.

Since I can't understand that feeling, I simply proceeded with the measurement as instructed, recording everything without any issues.

Finally, we were told to gather in the schoolyard, and I reluctantly made my way there, feeling somewhat bothered.

Since we needed to change from the measurement attire back into our uniforms, I headed to the changing room where I saw a girl with brown long hair.

It was Maron-san, a gentle and fluffy beauty who exudes an elegant atmosphere.

"Ah, Sachi-sama, are you done already?"

"Yeah, I just need to go to the schoolyard."

I occasionally have conversations like this with Maron-san.

We're not particularly close since we sit far apart in the classroom, but when our eyes meet, we exchange a few words.

Considering that I had turned down her lunch invitation once, I feel a bit guilty talking to her. However, she doesn't seem to mind at all.

One could say she has a broad heart or is the embodiment of kindness.

Thanks to her tolerance, I've started initiating conversations with her more often.

I hope that someday we can all get together, including Mil, and have lunch or something.

"The physical measurement seems to be ending sooner than I thought. It wasn't too difficult, and it felt much more relaxed compared to regular classes."

"I-Is that so? Well, if it's Sachi-sama, you don't seem to have any worries. But I was quite nervous."

"Huh, nervous?"

I look at Maron, who is in the middle of changing her clothes, and furrow my eyebrows.

Specifically, I see her massive bosom that seems like it could overflow from her underwear at any moment.

"Maron-san, there's nothing for you to be nervous about, right? You're not my roommate, but I think you're clearly at the top of all grade levels."

"Uh, well, what I meant was about my weight..."

Ah, I see. That's what she meant.

Due to my misunderstanding caused by Mil last night, I made an incorrect assumption.

Since last night, Mil has been devoting her time and effort to make her

breasts bigger.

In the end, she went to bed reciting prayers with her own prayer beads and bracelets, but the gods didn't smile upon her.

Unlike Mil, Maron seems to be concerned about her weight.

But I don't think she needs to worry about that either.

Maron shows a clearly dejected expression.

So, I quickly try to correct my misunderstanding.

However, Maron seems to have known from the beginning that I was mistaken, as she smiles with composure and says,

"It was just a joke."

Ah, I was surprised.

Feeling relieved, I change into my uniform and tilt my head.

"But what are we going to do in the schoolyard? I don't think there's anything else to measure."

I believe we have already revealed most of our physical information.

So, what else could they measure in the schoolyard?

I casually bring up the topic, and to my surprise, Maron responds with unexpected words.

"Oh? Don't you know, Sachi-sama?"

“Huh?”

“The final measurement in the physical examination is the measurement of ‘magical power.’ We gather in the schoolyard and perform practical exercises for that.”

“Measuring... magical power?”

At that moment, I think I had the same expression of despair, as if the world were about to end, just like Mil a while ago.

Chapter 27

Magical Energy Measurement

I never knew there was a measurement for magical energy. And to make matters worse, it's conducted in a practical format, with everyone watching. This means it will be known to everyone that I have no talent with a magical energy value of 1. In this magical kingdom, where magic prevails, having the talent of a sorcerer is considered the highest honor. And the magical energy value is considered the most accurate measure of a sorcerer's power, above all else. In essence, a high magical energy value earns admiration, while a low one invites ridicule in society. Well, that's obviously an exaggeration, but it's not entirely wrong within this magical academy.

“...Why does it have to be done in front of everyone?”

Of course, having a high magical energy value alone doesn't guarantee success as a sorcerer. It is only by combining magical knowledge and practical experience that one can truly harness that magical energy value. However, if one doesn't have a high magical energy value to begin with, they can't even step onto the starting line. That's why this country values noble blood that produces talented sorcerers above all else. As someone born into nobility but lacking in sorcerer talent, I have kept my magical energy value mostly hidden from others until now. Only a few people, like Mil, are aware of it. It would be acceptable if only one or two more people knew, but if it were dozens, the situation would change. It's simply embarrassing. In this place where raw talents gather, revealing a magical energy value of 1 would be a disgrace. Why does it have to be measured in front of everyone's eyes?

Lezan-sensei provided the explanation for that.

“Magical energy value serves as an indicator for sorcerers, and it must be measured accurately above all else. In the past, there were cases of faculty bribery and false reporting of magical energy values, so that's why it has become a practical examination format.”

I thought it was a story that would be found in a school for nobles. For a moment, I wondered what someone would gain from lying about their magical energy value. But this academy has a “Scholarship Student Program” where exceptionally talented students are selected. If chosen as a scholarship student, the tuition for that year is significantly reduced, and their academic record improves, giving them more control over their future paths after graduation. Being able to claim the top position in this renowned academy, where the children of distinguished families gather, is an attractive status indeed. It seems that to be selected as a scholarship student, not only good grades but also a magical energy value, which serves as a sorcerer’s indicator, are necessary. Hearing this explanation from Lezan-sensei, the motivation of the surrounding students visibly increased. They were determined to become scholarship students. Of course, motivation alone doesn’t increase one’s magical energy value, and the values are predetermined from birth.

“The method of measuring magical energy values involves the use of magical devices that apply this appraisal magic.”

Lezan-sensei brought in a “doll” about the size of an adult. I couldn’t tell what material it was made of, but it looked like a pure white mannequin. It had no face and had a smooth, featureless appearance, giving off an eerie vibe. The only standout feature was a dial on its forehead, capable of displaying three-digit numbers. That dial seemed to be the instrument-like element for measurement.

“When you cast a designated spell at this doll, the dial will rotate according to its power. The spell you will be using is called ‘Invisible Bullet: Phantom Shell,’ an attribute-less magic that simply delivers an impact forward. This way, regardless of the color of magical elements, the magical energy value is purely reflected.”

It seemed like the doll itself was the measuring device, but was it necessary for it to be humanoid? That question arose, but let’s put that aside for now. I was slightly surprised by how simple the measurement method was. Just cast the attribute-less magic into the doll. Plus, since multiple dolls were prepared, the process progressed quite quickly, with students taking turns for measurements.

After receiving the incantation from the teacher, we would cast the

spell into the doll.

“Trigger pulled—Shells from the blind spot—Blast through the obstructing wall—Invisible Bullet: Phantom Shell!”

A bullet made of compressed air was shot from their outstretched palm, causing the doll to be pushed back by the invisible impact. Apparently, the magic didn't have that much destructive power, as the doll only moved slightly even with a high magical energy value. The dial on the doll's forehead clicked and displayed a number.

“It's 140 for the magical energy value. Next student...”

I vaguely remembered hearing that the average magical energy value for a national sorcerer was around 150. Since the magical energy value is determined at birth, those with values close to that average were considered to have the potential to become national sorcerers. Students continued to achieve magical energy values close to the average one after another, increasing my anxiety.

“Wow, amazing!”

“Hmm?”

Noticing the commotion nearby, I turned to see an unusual crowd gathering. And at the center stood Maron, the person I had just spoken to. Maron opened her right palm with a swift motion, and in front of her was the measurement doll lying on the ground. It had been blown away to a significantly farther distance compared to the other students.

Lezan-sensei, checking the dial on the doll's forehead, pronounced an astonishing number.

“Maron Melange, magical energy value 280!”

“2... 280?!”

Repeating once again, the average magical energy value for a national sorcerer is around 150. Having a magical energy value around that range is more than enough to be recognized by the country as a competent sorcerer. And Maron had achieved a magical energy value of over 200, an astonishing 280. While his magical energy value had likely been determined since birth, it seemed that it hadn't been publicly disclosed in a grand manner. The surrounding students all had their mouths wide open in disbelief.

“Has there ever been a student with such a high magical energy value before?”

“There are a few students each year with values over 200, but...”

“The teacher said they've rarely seen values close to 300...”

I didn't know how many years had passed since the academy's founding, but Maron's magical energy value would be ranked among the top students in the history of the academy. I thought she was an excellent student, but I never expected her to be that amazing. Maron herself seemed unaware of her own greatness, looking bewildered amidst the commotion. ...She's quite adorable.

“Poir Mule, magical energy value 255!”

Suddenly, a voice was heard from behind, causing the students who had been focused on Maron to turn their heads simultaneously. There stood a golden-haired girl wearing a pointed hat reminiscent of a nightcap. She was none other than Poir, a classmate of ours. I often saw her spending time with Maron. Come to think of it, when I was invited to have lunch with them, she was sitting with Maron. She always seemed drowsy, with her eyes half-closed, and frequently dozed off during class, earning her reprimands. The girl whom I, on my own, dubbed the “Sleep-Deprived Girl” seemed to have achieved remarkable results in the magical energy measurement. Her magical energy value was 255, nearing Maron's 280. Given her constant sleepy impression, it felt somewhat surprising.

“She’s from Class A, right?”

“Yeah, maybe this year Class A has an abundance of talented students.”

The gazes of students from other classes gradually shifted towards the students of Class A. Although it might just be a coincidence, there indeed seemed to be a concentration of outstanding students in Class A. With two students already surpassing a magical energy value of 250, it was natural for people around to hold high expectations. In the midst of it all, it was now my turn.

“...”

Oh no, I’m completely being watched. I’m attracting the attention of numerous students. In addition to the information about the talented students gathering in Class A... Since the mock battle with Kaien, I’ve become someone who draws attention for various reasons. It’s hard for everyone to believe that a child of a renowned magician’s family lost to a mere commoner’s child. Especially since Kaien was considered the strongest candidate in this year’s class. And now, everyone wants to know the magical energy value of the commoner girl who defeated Cayenne. Please, I want them to stop. I want them to look away. I want everyone to disappear. Because, I...

“Trigger pulled——Shells from the blind spot——Blast through the obstructing wall——Invisible Bullet: Phantom Shell!”

From my outstretched right hand, a tiny ball of air, no bigger than a candy, was released. It barely touched the doll in front of me before dissipating into nothingness. It was nothing like the bullets of compressed air that everyone else was firing—a mere puff of breath. Naturally, the dial barely moved, with only the rightmost number sluggishly rotating, as if it were a slow-paced turtle.

‘001.’

Soon, that number appeared on the doll’s forehead, and the surroundings fell into complete silence. It felt as if time had stopped.

Then, laughter erupted from somewhere, starting with a light ‘pu’ sound, and it spread explosively like a contagious virus.

“Hahaha! What the heck was that?”

“I’ve never heard of a magical energy value of 1!”

“Is she really the magician who defeated Kaien?”

Laughter filled the air, and my face grew hot. Embarrassment caused my heart to race rapidly. I wished I could disappear. Eventually, the supervising teacher, sensing something was amiss, hurried over to me.

“A-Are you really putting in your best effort? I’ve never seen or heard of a student with a magical energy value of 1...”

“T-That’s... my full power...”

As I confessed with a trembling voice, the cheeks of the surrounding students loosened even further. They seemed eager to question how I managed to enter this academy and what I was doing here. Rumors began to circulate, suggesting that my victory against Kaien might have been a fluke or even a deception. Gradually, the students distanced themselves, and the gazes that had been focused on me completely vanished. No one paid me any attention anymore.

...

Unexpectedly, I had managed to escape the constant scrutiny that had been troubling me recently. Although I hadn’t been accustomed to being in the spotlight and had felt uncomfortable, suddenly being freed from the surrounding gazes also left me feeling lonely. Above all, it was disheartening to know that the reason I could escape from everyone’s gaze was the embarrassing fact of having a magical energy value of 1. Well, in a way, it was for the best. I had wanted to avoid attention as much as possible, and the attention I received was overwhelming. It left me with indescribable emotions. With a heavy heart, after finishing the final magical energy measurement of the

physical examinations, I reluctantly headed back to the classroom.

Just as I took a step forward...

“W-What the heck is that guy!?”

“Huh?”

Many students were looking in surprise at something. Curious, I followed their gaze and saw that the measurement doll had flown all the way to the edge of the schoolyard. Even Maron hadn't been able to send it flying that far—only reaching about the center of the yard. My eyes slowly moved to the person who seemed to have blown away the doll.

And there she was...

“Um, um...!”

Gathering the attention of numerous students, nervously adjusting her blue hair and fiddling with it, was my roommate, Mil. It seemed like she realized that she had done something incredible, as she wriggled her body in agitation, her eyes swimming. Did Mil blow away the doll to that extent? Eventually, the female teacher who went to retrieve the doll must have seen the dial on its forehead, as she expressed her astonishment in a voice that reached us.

“Ma-Ma, magical energy value 350!?”

“What?!”

“Huh?!?”

In an instant, the gazes directed at Mil transformed into something bordering on awe. A magical energy value of 350. In an academy where it was considered rare for a student to surpass 200, she had achieved an otherworldly value exceeding 300. I had expected her

magical energy value to be quite high, based on the few joint missions we had undertaken together, but I never imagined it would be such an enormous figure. And it was Mil, a fragile and timid commoner, who had accomplished it. The surrounding students stared wide-eyed in disbelief. However, the person herself remained unaware—unaware of the magnitude of her magical energy value and the numerous trials that awaited her.

“Is... is this something amazing?”

Uttering those words, the pride of a noble's son and daughter, with their wounded pride, gritted their teeth in frustration.

Chapter 28

Special Student

After the physical measurements, Mil was called to the staff room by the teacher, causing a stir among the entire grade.

After a while, Mil returned to the classroom.

Ever since returning from the staff room, Mil had been absent-minded, staring into space.

Everyone, not just me, seemed curious about what they talked about, but no one approached to ask.

It had been a month since we entered the school, and amidst the formation of groups within the class, Mil and I found ourselves isolated.

Rather than avoiding Mil, it seemed like Mil was consciously avoiding contact with others due to their unfortunate condition.

Consequently, others also felt a difficult atmosphere around Mil and didn't approach them or initiate conversations.

I could talk to Mil normally, but it felt awkward to do so with everyone's attention focused on us.

So, when I returned to the dorm room, I decided to ask.

"What did they talk about in the staff room?"

"I've been selected as a scholarship student."

“What? Seriously?”

I recalled the scholarship program. Being chosen as a scholarship student meant a significant reduction in tuition fees, as well as receiving bonus points on our academic records. Above all, it was a prestigious title to be able to claim the provisional top spot at the renowned Magic Academy.

Mil was chosen for that?

“Isn’t it based not only on magical aptitude but also on school grades? Isn’t it too early for you to be chosen?”

Being selected as a scholarship student right after the magical aptitude test seemed questionable.

“As for my magical aptitude, based on the records available, it seems that I have one of the highest magical aptitudes in the history of the school. There are only a few magicians in the world who have a magical aptitude exceeding 300, and they asked me if I could become the first scholarship student and represent this year’s class. I was put under pressure to accept.”

“That’s... a significant burden for Mil, isn’t it?”

The reason for Mil’s gloomy expression was finally clear. Anyone would feel nervous when burdened with such pressure.

Well, in a world where the average magical aptitude of a national magician is said to be around 150, having an astonishing magical aptitude of over 300 is exceptional. The school probably didn’t want to let go of such a valuable individual and wanted to provide as much support as possible. When Mil achieves great success someday, it will undoubtedly boost the reputation of our alma mater, the Royal Harvest Magic Academy.

Mil was begged and, being hesitant in expressing their own will, ended up accepting.

It's a bit unfortunate, or rather... I mean, please don't say such sad things. If you haven't received many compliments from others, I'll give you plenty.

"Well, regardless, congratulations, Mil. Being a scholarship student at the Royal Harvest Magic Academy is incredibly amazing. From tomorrow onwards, you can walk proudly through the center of the hallway."

"I usually walk along the edge of the hallway... And honestly, I don't think I can be proud of these results."

"You can't be proud? Even though you were chosen as a scholarship student at the Magic Academy? With that, you could flaunt your assets to your heart's content without getting reprimanded, don't you think?"

"Ah, right. I guess the results of the physical measurements weren't great."

"No, that's not it! It's true that the physical measurements had mixed results, and my bust size wasn't satisfactory, but when I say I can't be proud, it's because of... Well..."

As Mil started to speak, she suddenly stopped and her lips trembled hesitantly.

Waiting for her continued words with a tilt of my head, Mil eventually turned away with a gloomy face.

"Oh, well, it's nothing after all."

"...?"

In the end, she closed her mouth and fell into silence.

After that, Mil didn't say anything more, and I never found out the reason why she couldn't take pride in becoming a scholarship student.

The remark about not being able to flaunt her assets due to bad results in the physical measurements was just a joke.

Could there be another reason why she couldn't boast about becoming a scholarship student?

I didn't understand at that time, but I soon found out.

The next day, when I arrived at the academy, the news about the scholarship students had already spread throughout the campus.

The students from other grades and the teachers were surprised by the scholarship selection taking place about a month earlier than usual.

Observing the academy's reaction, Mil-chan, who had already transformed into the familiar Little Red Riding Hood, completely covered her face. She shrank her body and trembled nervously, trying to avoid catching anyone's attention, walking along the edge of the hallway.

She didn't look like the illustrious scholarship student at all.

Of course, the other students didn't recognize the Little Red Riding Hood as the rumored scholarship student, so she was able to reach the classroom without any significant interaction.

However, once she took her seat, she couldn't escape the surrounding gazes.

Not only our classmates, but also students from other classes who had heard about the scholarship student crowded near the classroom, scrutinizing Mil's every move.

As I watched from the side, it was evident that those gazes held no

positive intentions.

“Why did that person become a scholarship student...”

“I can’t understand it...”

“...?”

Naturally, Mil also heard those voices, and she shrank her shoulders in dismay.

That’s when I finally understood what Mil wanted to say last night.

“I see, so that’s what Mil was trying to express.”

Even as a scholarship student, she couldn’t hold her head high.

It was only natural since Mil and I, being commoners, were looked down upon by the aristocratic students in this academy.

Given that Mil had managed to obtain the honor of being a scholarship student despite such circumstances, it was expected that she would be the target of envy and jealousy.

Mil had feared this outcome.

And as expected, she ended up receiving jealous glares from the surrounding students.

While the academy may not have had any ill intentions behind this situation, I couldn’t blame them either.

So, I wanted to offer at least some consolation and whispered to Mil in a low voice:

“Don’t worry, Mil. You don’t need to mind it. You received the recognition you deserved, so you can hold your head high.”

“Y-Yes...”

But even so, Mil was a timid person.

Merely being subjected to gazes filled with animosity made her feel as if she were being pricked by a thousand needles.

Mil remained seated, huddled with her blue hood covering her face, and lowered her head.

I wanted to do something to help, but I couldn’t think of any particular solution.

After all, I couldn’t do anything about the gazes I had received myself after the mock battle with Kaien.

Ultimately, it was the magical aptitude test that had diverted those gazes.

And strangely enough, the attention I had gathered from that incident immediately shifted entirely to Mil.

Chapter 29

Mil's Dilemma as a Scholarship Student

A bench in the corner of the courtyard.

This place, with poor sunlight and a dim atmosphere, is hardly used by anyone at any time of the day.

Therefore, when they want to avoid having meals in the cafeteria, Sachiko and Mil often make effective use of this spot.

And today, once again attracting attention from the surrounding students, Sachiko and Mil arrived at the courtyard bench, trying to avoid being seen.

However, it was Mil who was being noticed today, not Sachiko, so her face appeared somewhat gloomy.

Without even taking a bite of the pastry she bought from the cafeteria, Mil was silently gazing ahead and letting out small sighs.

In contrast, Sachiko was munching on her bread, nodding in understanding.

"I understand what you meant, Mil. You couldn't genuinely be happy because you knew that becoming a scholarship student would undoubtedly draw resentment from other students."

"Yes..."

The moment she received the news about being scholarship students in the faculty office, Mil had anticipated this outcome.

She couldn't help but think that she should have declined, but she couldn't bring herself to shake her head as the teachers persuaded her convincingly.

Mil despised her own cowardice.

Above all, she couldn't ignore the significant benefit of having her tuition substantially waived. She took on the role, hoping that it would contribute even a little to her sick mother's medical expenses.

She still doesn't think that her choice was a mistake.

But she doesn't think it was a perfect solution either.

"These nobles who are supposed to excel in magical talent, feeling unsatisfied that they are being outperformed by a commoner girl in academics and even losing the honorable title of a scholarship student... They really have a remarkable sense of pride."

"Nevertheless, I still believe that this title is an overwhelming evaluation that I don't deserve."

To the point where she felt it would have been more appropriate for someone else to receive it.

There should be more outstanding students than herself.

Yet, she, who was chosen as a scholarship student based solely on her magical aptitude value, still doesn't fully realize it.

With the negative label of being a commoner-born and a lack of consensus from her surroundings, many voices of dissent can be heard.

"You don't have to pay attention to what those others say. It's Mil who was chosen as a scholarship student, no matter what anyone else says."

You should proudly embrace it. I knew from the beginning that you were an amazing person, and I think this recognition is well-deserved.”

“Sachiko...”

Perhaps her anxious emotions were visible, as Sachiko comforted her while munching on her bread.

However, her feelings still wouldn’t brighten up.

She couldn’t help but feel that it was absurd for someone as timid as herself to be chosen as a scholarship student in the Magic Academy.

If someone were to become a scholarship student, there should be more suitable candidates...

“Huh? What’s wrong?”

“Oh, no, it’s nothing.”

While stealing a glance at Sachiko, who was chewing on her pastry, Mil quickly averted her gaze and nibbled on her own bread, trying to deceive herself.

She knew of someone who was much stronger, courageous, and deserving of being chosen as a scholarship student than herself.

Yet, that person receives ridicule from other students and is looked down upon simply because her magical aptitude value is 1.

It’s frustrating to see such a talented person being overlooked and made a laughingstock.

Sachiko Malmurard, in this academy, and perhaps among magicians worldwide, could easily be touted as “the strongest.”

Doesn't Sachiko feel frustrated?

Doesn't she harbor any discontent about the unfair evaluation and being ridiculed in the current situation?

As Mil pondered about asking her, a voice came from a different direction before she had a chance to speak.

“Hmm, who are you two?”

“Eh?”

When I turned to the source of the voice, there stood Lezan Elve, with long flowing purple hair and distinctive black glasses.

Sachiko, who was munching on her pastry, quickly swallowed and raised her hand to greet Lezan, who was their homeroom teacher.

“Oh, Sensei, what are you doing in a place like this?”

“Sometimes I have lunch here too. The cafeteria was crowded today, so I decided to come here after a long time.”

It turned out that Lezan also made effective use of this bench, which made me feel a slight sense of familiarity. Sachiko and I shifted a little to the side, as if offering the bench to Lezan, who seemed hesitant to sit down and leave.

However, Sachiko persistently urged her with a “please, please” gesture, so she reluctantly took a seat.

She held a pastry, presumably bought from the cafeteria, in one hand and quickly ate it.

Even though they were eating the same thing, there was an elegance

in Lezan's manner that could be sensed.

Sitting on the bench, with the school courtyard as the backdrop, she took small bites of her bread. It seemed like a scene that could be used as an advertisement for a bakery.

As I was captivated by the scenery, Lezan, who had finished eating without me noticing, turned towards me.

“By the way, I forgot to mention earlier. Congratulations again, Miltie Glasse, on becoming a scholarship student. It makes me proud to have one of my assigned students chosen as a scholarship student.”

“Oh, no, it's not really...”

I felt a great sense of discomfort being praised when I hadn't really done anything.

While scratching my cheek with a frustrating feeling, Sachiko, who was left out, raised her hand with an annoyed expression.

“Hey, Sensei, what about me?”

“Sachiko-kun, I am convinced that you are also one of the students I can proudly boast about. The magical aptitude test may have been tough for you, but the magical aptitude value is only an indicator of talent. True strength can only be seen in practical combat. Let those who want to laugh, laugh.”

I wanted to enthusiastically agree with that opinion.

Indeed, true strength can only be demonstrated in practical combat.

When it came to Sachiko's abilities, it was exactly the case. The measurement of magical aptitude alone couldn't gauge everything.

Let those who want to laugh, laugh. How good would it have been if I could have said that to Sachiko? I regretted it a little.

“If it escalates to bullying, I will immediately intervene, so you don’t have to worry. Besides, the final exams will start soon. It’s an examination where only those with true magical talent will survive, and the rest will be eliminated. You just have to showcase your true abilities there.”

“Oh, Sensei, you’re saying something good!”

I thought it was a teacher-like opinion fitting for a merit-based magic academy.

Sachiko also seemed to resonate with that opinion, smiling with a very happy expression.

True abilities will inevitably be revealed in exams.

Sachiko’s true prowess will be displayed there, and unlike the mock battle with Kaen, it will be witnessed by a larger number of students.

The unfair evaluation she received will surely be resolved with time.

“By the way, Miltie-kun, I have one piece of information for you.”

“Eh?”

“Do you have any plans after school today?”

Upon being asked, I inadvertently let out a sound of surprise.

Then I glanced at Sachiko, and my mouth opened and closed in a fluster.

We always had a promise to go home together after school.

Even when we received school requests, we always discussed and decided together. We always spent our afternoons together.

But today, for the first time, it seemed like I might have a plan that doesn't involve Sachiko.

Without saying anything, Sachiko nodded, indicating, "It's okay, you don't have to worry about me."

With just that, I understood that she was telling me, "You don't have to worry about me."

"Well, there's, uh, nothing really..."

"I see. In that case, come to the headmaster's office as soon as classes end. The headmaster personally wants to talk to you about something."

"The, the headmaster...?"

The head of the Royal Harvest Magic Academy.

One of the great figures who could become a leading candidate among the most influential people in the world of magicians.

To think that such an incredible person personally wanted to talk to me.

Upon hearing that, I instantly broke out in nervous sweat.

Chapter 30

Headmaster-san

After School.

As instructed by Rezan, Mil decided to go and talk to the headmaster.

So Sachi, who always goes home together with me after school, went back to the dormitory first.

She had asked to be told about it later, but Mil thought it would depend on the content.

If it wasn't a good conversation, she didn't know how her state of mind would be afterward.

Above all, it was Sachi who had caused her such anxiety.

"If you come back crying and angry, I'll comfort you, so don't worry."

"I'm not going to get scolded..."

There was no other way to put it, probably.

Anyway, after the classes ended and she parted with Sach, Mil headed to the headmaster's office.

The magic academy's building was a four-story structure, consisting of the East Wing and the West Wing.

The two buildings were connected by two corridors in the shape of "II," and when viewed from above, the academy formed the shape of the letter "P."

In the center, there was a spacious courtyard where they had lunch today, and it had become a popular place for students to relax.

The East Wing housed regular classrooms used for everyday lessons, so students mainly frequented that side.

On the other hand, the West Wing had classrooms used for research clubs and other special purposes, and the staff room where the teachers gathered was also located in this wing.

Therefore, Mil rarely visited the West Wing and walked down the hallway with an uneasy gait.

“I-I’m scared...”

She had come to the staff room in this West Wing when she was called there the other day, but there was a teacher as her guide at that time, so she didn’t get lost.

However, today she was alone. She had never had the opportunity to enter the West Wing alone before, and an indescribable fear welled up within her.

She realized just how much she relied on Sachi, and she couldn’t suppress her involuntary sense of fear.

Above all, she had recently drawn attention to herself, so she hoped to reach the headmaster’s office without meeting anyone if possible.

Was that wish answered by God? Mil arrived on the fourth floor without encountering anyone.

And in front of what she presumed to be the headmaster’s room, there was a familiar woman with purple hair waiting.

“I’m grateful that you came, Miltie-kun. Shall we go inside right away?”

“Y-Yes...”

Seeing Rezan’s figure, her sense of relief was short-lived, and tension quickly resurfaced.

Behind these golden double doors, a great magician who ruled over the magic academy was waiting.

She had seen her on the day of the entrance ceremony, standing on the podium, explaining various matters about the academy.

She was an elderly lady with golden hair gathered into a single bun. She had many wrinkles on her face, and she seemed to be using a cane.

Come to think of it, she didn’t recall seeing the headmaster around the campus, so this would be their reunion since then.

She still felt an inexplicable unease, and as Rezan knocked on the golden doors three times:

“Headmaster Ananas, Miltie Glasse has arrived.”

“Very well, come in.”

A response came from behind the doors, and Mil couldn’t help but tilt her head.

Because the voice she heard and the image of the headmaster that came to mind showed a clear difference in age.

(Was that... a child’s voice?)

Curious but with a puzzled expression, Mil opened the door and entered, finding herself in a lavishly decorated, spacious room.

The room was nearly square in shape, with a soft-looking sofa and a glass-covered table placed in one corner.

Presumably, it was a seating area for conversations with guests.

In the opposite corner, there was a large cauldron of some sort, with something bubbling and simmering inside it.

It looked like a cauldron from a fairy tale, with a witch stirring it with a long wooden spoon.

But what surprised Mil the most was the person sitting in the distinguished seat at the back of the room.

“So, you’re Miltie Glasse, the first-year scholarship student. I’m glad you made it this far.”

“T-Toddler...”

The elderly lady with the bun she had imagined was nowhere to be found...

Instead, there was a young girl with golden hair who appeared to be around five or six years old, waiting with a proud expression on her face.

Mil opened her mouth wide and stood there dumbfounded.

“Hmm? What’s the matter? Is there something on my face?”

“No, it’s not that...”

On the contrary, what puzzled her was the fact that the person had

flawless, glossy skin with no wrinkles.

Wasn't that elderly lady she saw on the day of the entrance ceremony the headmaster of this magic academy?

Answering her question, Rezan, who entered afterward, said:

"Headmaster Ananas, the disguise spell has worn off..."

"Hmm, it hasn't worn off. I simply didn't use it from the beginning today. After all, I'm only going to have a conversation with one student."

"A disguise..."

There is indeed a magic spell that can change one's appearance.

It is a versatile magic that, when used by someone with a strong imagination, can even transform them into the shape of a magical beast. Many magicians still use it in combat.

But why would they bother using a disguise spell just to appear before students?

And why choose an aged appearance, of all things?

As the question appeared on her face, the headmaster let out a self-deprecating smile and said:

"If I were to have such a frail appearance, the students would surely take me lightly. After all, this magic academy is filled with hot-blooded individuals. To add a little dignity, I chose the appearance of an old woman."

"Well..."

Even if she transformed from a young girl to an old woman, it didn't seem to make much of a difference in how she was treated.

And simply having the title of headmaster would prevent any students from being disrespectful, she believed.

As someone who is shy around people, Mil would feel nervous regardless of the appearance.

In any case, now that she understood the reason behind the old woman's disguise, Mil recognized the young girl in front of her as the headmaster.

At the same time, the headmaster began speaking, including a self-introduction.

"Well then, you probably know, but I am Ananas Clostata, the headmaster of this magic academy. Congratulations on being selected as a scholarship student, Miltie Glasse."

"Th-Thank you very much."

She displayed a slow reaction to the sudden revelation.

Observing Mil's expression, Ananas raised her thin eyebrows inquisitively.

"Hmm? You seem unsatisfied with something..."

"Well, um... I still can't believe that someone like me is a scholarship student, you know..."

Honest with her feelings, Mil expressed her doubts, and Ananas, crossing her arms in a pose that didn't match her appearance, lowered her head in contemplation for a moment.

Eventually, she raised her childlike face and glanced at Rezan.

“I recall that the selection of scholarship students this time was supposed to consider not only the results of magical power measurement but also other achievements.”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

It seemed that the headmaster wasn’t deeply involved in the selection of scholarship students.

However, the headmaster spoke convincingly.

“Taking into account your attitude in class, the results of the entrance exam, and your performance in academy requests, among other factors, it was determined that you were worthy of being a scholarship student of our 320th generation. Are you satisfied now?”

“...Y-Yes.”

Despite that, Mil still appeared unconvinced, her face clouded.

Learning that the criteria weren’t solely based on magical power made her feel somewhat reassured, but ultimately, her other achievements weren’t particularly outstanding.

Her attitude in class was just being quiet, and the results of the entrance exam and the completion of academy requests were all achieved with the help of that person.

In that case, isn’t Sachi the amazing one, not herself?

Once again, the thought of Sachi came to mind, and Mil unknowingly compared herself to her.

Feeling down on her own, unbeknownst to her, Ananas continued.

“Now, I have a favor to ask of you as a scholarship student.”

“A favor?”

Mil recalled her purpose for coming here.

She had come because the headmaster wanted to talk to her directly, but what could this favor be?

“Have you heard that recently the failure rate of students in completing academy requests... in other words, the number of ‘failed attempts,’ has been unusually high?”

“N-No, I haven’t heard much about it...”

Just as she started to say that, she suddenly realized.

The other day, they accepted the request to defeat the Rock Golem in the Golden Sands.

Come to think of it, before they took on the request, another group of students had attempted it but couldn’t defeat the Rock Golem, leaving it incomplete.

Because of that, the receptionist girl with straight bangs looked troubled, and Sachi, feeling sorry for her, took on the request.

So, does this mean there has been an increase in failed requests recently?

“It’s not just about the new students. Even the excellent second and third-year students who have passed their advancement exams have been failing academy requests more frequently.”

“W-Why...?”

The Royal Harvest Academy of Magic is the world’s premier institution for training magicians.

Simply being accepted into the academy is proof of having exceptional talent as a magician, and on top of that, the second and third-year students who have advanced are supposed to be incredibly skilled individuals.

So why are these people, who should be so capable, failing the academy requests they take on?

Even though they’re called requests, they shouldn’t be that difficult.

“The students who fail the requests have no clear reason, saying things like ‘I wasn’t feeling well’ or ‘I couldn’t use magic properly.’ I can’t understand any definitive reasons. I can’t imagine our students making poor excuses, but the number of requests that are left unfinished due to these failures is rapidly increasing.”

“I see...”

So there are no clear reasons.

If there were clear causes, they could devise countermeasures, but if it was simply a matter of not feeling well, it would be attributed to “the fickleness of fate.”

There’s no need to blame anyone.

However, regardless of the reasons or causes, the reality is that there are indeed unfinished requests.

“As a result, the trust in the academy has plummeted, and the number of people coming to the academy for requests is decreasing. That’s why I want to ask you to do something.”

“T-That means...?”

With a puzzled expression, Mil tilted her head, and Ananas, her cheeks relaxed, spoke.

“I want you, as a scholarship student, to resolve the academy requests that are currently unfinished and left hanging.”

“Huh...?”

“We’ve already assigned requests to excellent second and third-year students, but there are only so many of them. We were looking for someone from the first-year students who could help. Then I heard about you, who not only has excellent grades but was also selected as a scholarship student. I thought it would be great if you could assist us.”

Resolving the unfinished requests.

It’s not an exceptionally difficult task, but the reason why she was chosen is the only thing bothering her.

Mil hasn’t been fulfilling the academy requests on her own until now.

In a sense, in this academy, she has always had an incredibly reliable ally by her side, so she thought it was easy to complete the requests.

Ananas, who doesn’t know that, had chosen Mil for perfectly valid reasons.

“There are other first-year students who could handle it, but we trust the scholarship student like you the most. I won’t force you, but if you’re willing to do it, I’d like to offer you higher rewards and points than usual for the requests. What do you think? Will you accept?”

...

She was filled with the immediate desire to respond, saying, “This is an overestimation by the teachers. I clearly lack the necessary skills, so I decline.”

To assist in completing the academy requests alongside second and third-year students, bypassing the other students in her own year, is reckless.

She wasn’t someone worthy of the honorable title of scholarship student.

She was just a failure who was constantly saved by Sachi, and she had never solved a request on her own.

So, if it were the usual Mil, she would have declined, feeling hesitant.

But at that moment, she hesitated, looking troubled, and eventually opened her mouth with determination, surprising herself with her answer.

“If... if it’s okay with me, then I would be honored to...”

Mil secretly clenched her fists tightly.

Chapter 31

Departure

“Oh, welcome back~”

When I returned to the dorm room, Sachi was lying on the bed, looking up at me from the edge with her face upside down. She had a habit of relaxing like that, which left me momentarily dumbfounded, but I quickly regained my composure and entered the room. Sachi sat up and turned towards me.

“From the look of it, it seems like you didn’t receive a lecture.”

“What did you expect when I came back...”

I wasn’t sure what expression I had on my face, but for the time being, it seemed I was spared from a lecture. Sachi then placed her hand on her face and began imitating something irritating.

“Ehh! Sachi-san! I’m so sad because the teacher scolded me! Please comfort me a lot, just like always!”

“I’ve never said anything like that!”

And I swore firmly in my heart that I would never say such a thing in the future.

“So, what did the principal talk to you about? Did you get a reward for becoming a special scholarship student?”

“Oh, no, well...”

When asked again, I unintentionally stumbled over my words. Seeing

my reaction, Sachi tilted her head in confusion.

“Is there something difficult to say? Well, you don’t have to force yourself to say it if it’s difficult...”

“I-It’s not that it’s difficult to say, but I was just thinking about how to explain...”

I wasn’t particularly skilled at explaining things, and on top of that, the content of the conversation was somewhat complicated. I pondered for a while on how to convey it accurately.

Eventually, without mentioning the appearance of the principal, I did my best to explain as much as I could with my words.

“Hmm, I see. So that’s the request you received.”

After listening, Sachi nodded with a satisfied expression. I thought it was good that she seemed to have understood.

But immediately, that relief disappeared into darkness.

“Recently, there have been many disappointing students, so they want the special scholarship student, Mil, to clean up after them.”

“You overheard the conversation?”

Completely different. Not a single word was said like that. I wanted her to refrain from saying such unpleasant things, so I glared at Sachi, but she continued playfully.

“It’s an exaggeration to say ‘clean up after them,’ but basically, it means that they want you, Mil, who can be trusted more than other students, to help with completing the request, right? I understand it properly, so it’s okay, it’s okay!”

“Please don’t phrase it in a way that could be misunderstood.”

I was in a position where I could easily incur resentment. Taking care of the mess of students from upper-class backgrounds was nothing short of unpleasant gossip.

“But even though you were just asked to help with completing the request, why does Mil look a bit uneasy? You’ll receive a good reward or a lot of achievement points, right? I think you should be happier...”

“W-Well, that’s true, but...”

If I only considered the reward and achievement points, it was indeed a tempting offer. However, my overwhelming feeling of unease outweighed those factors.

Was that unease showing on my face? Sachi peered into my face and asked.

“If you’re okay with it, should I help too?”

“Huh?”

“Nobody told you that you can’t cooperate with someone else, right? So, I don’t think there’s any problem if we accept quest requests together like we always do, right?”

In an instant, the feeling of unease vanished like a clear summer sky. Just the thought of Sachi’s cooperation made me feel so relieved. It was incredibly reassuring.

However, quickly coming back to my senses, I shook my head and replied.

“N-No, please let me do this alone. I want to try doing it alone, just by myself.”

“Alone...?”

I received a questioning look from Sachi.

That’s right, we would usually accept quest requests together.

This time, since I wasn’t explicitly told not to cooperate with others by Headmaster Ananas, there wouldn’t be any problem with Sachi helping me with the request. However, I wanted to try completing the quest on my own, without relying on anyone else. I wanted to fulfill the entrusted task solely by myself.

“I want you, the special scholarship student, to resolve the school requests that are currently incomplete and abandoned.”

When I received this request from Headmaster Ananas, I was genuinely happy. It would be a lie to say that I had no worries, but everyone feels pleased when their abilities are recognized by someone, somewhere. Although I felt it was too much of an honor to be chosen as a special scholarship student, deep down, there was a hint of joy seeping through.

(Someday, I want to become like Sachi-san...)

Come to think of it, ever since the day of the entrance exam, I had been receiving help from Sachi. During the exam, she helped me look for the things I lost, and she even retrieved the acceptance item that was taken by other examinees. She aided me when I got into trouble with another student after enrolling, and when my father’s pendant, a keepsake, was broken, she got angry on my behalf. Recently, by accompanying her, I’ve been able to earn achievement points as well.

In every aspect, I have been supported by Sachi. The thought of not having her by my side sent a shiver down my spine.

However, I didn’t want to remain in a state of being carried or supported anymore. As a student of the Magic Academy, I wanted to fight and succeed on my own. I believed it would contribute to my

personal growth and be the key to breaking free from my dependence on Sachi. Eventually, I wanted to become a reliable and cool magician like her.

But Sachi, unaware of this conviction, responded with an ordinary reaction.

“Well, if Mil says so, then okay. Do your best with the quest. Just don’t get too carried away and spin your wheels.”

“Y-Yes...”

“Oh, and if you encounter any difficulties, don’t hesitate to call for help. Sachi is always free, so feel free to ask anytime.”

Sachi said kindly.

I felt an impulse to rely on her words right away, but I firmly closed my mouth and resisted the urge. This was something I had to accomplish on my own, as a special scholarship student of my year.

From that day onward, Mil would depart from Sachi’s side and face quest requests alone.

Chapter 32

Boredom

Two weeks had passed since Mil started helping with request completions.

During that time, I also took on school requests on my own and earned points towards the final exam's subjugation quota.

Having finished my point-earning tasks yesterday, I now found myself with nothing to do after school.

"I have nothing to do..."

After classes ended, I sat idly at my desk, unable to think of any ways to kill time.

Mil had once again gone to help with request completions, and she hadn't asked me to join her.

Maybe I should have just tagged along without her permission?

But it seemed like Mil didn't want me to lend a hand, so it would probably be best to refrain from doing so.

"...I'm bored."

Though I pondered at my desk for a while after class, I couldn't come up with any ways to occupy myself.

If I had more friends, I could hang out with them after school or do something fun, but unfortunately, I didn't have any friends.

The two girls who had just left the classroom, seemingly in a

harmonious mood, were probably heading to the commercial district in town to go shopping or something.

Thinking about that made me realize how inept I was at managing my time while I sat here, slumping at my desk.

Feeling helpless, I left the empty classroom with heavy steps and began wandering aimlessly around the school building.

I explored not only the East Wing, where I usually went, but also the West Wing, which was a special building.

However, there was nothing particularly interesting, so I ended up near the library, located close to the school building.

Well, if anywhere, I thought I might be able to kill some time here.

The library was a large cylindrical building with five floors.

The central part had an open ceiling, allowing a view of the upper floors, and the seats were already occupied by numerous students.

As I looked around, I saw students quietly reading books or diligently studying with their pens moving across paper.

And there I stood, with no purpose, simply lingering.

Overwhelmed by a strange sense of guilt or inferiority, I instinctively covered my eyes with both hands.

Why did I come here in the first place?

I thought I would read an interesting book if there was one, but I no longer felt like it.

Unable to bear the feeling of restlessness, I turned on my heel and was

about to leave the library.

That's when...

"Oh, Sachiko-san?"

"Huh?"

Suddenly called out, I stopped in my tracks.

When I turned around, I saw a familiar female student with brown fluffy hair swaying. It was Maron-san.

Maron-san, who achieved excellent results in the magical power measurement during the physical examination and probably had the largest bust in the year, greeted me.

"What a coincidence to meet you here in the library at this hour."

"I was surprised too. Do you often come here, Maron-san?"

Considering her serious impression, it wouldn't be strange for her to be a regular at the library.

As expected, Maron-san smiled and nodded.

"On days when I feel that my learning is insufficient after attending classes, I often come here to study."

"Wow, you're diligent in your studies..."

When they feel that their learning is insufficient after attending classes, it seems like everyone comes to the library to study.

As for me, I would just brush it off with a feeling of “Oh well, I was sleepy that day,” and let it pass.

“I’m not particularly skilled in practical magic, so I want to make sure I study properly so as not to fall behind other students in that aspect,” Maron-san explained.

“Huh? Maron-san, you’re not good at practical magic? But I remember your magical power score being really high, right?”

I think she was the second-highest after Mil, boasting an impressive magical power score of 350.

What does it mean to have such a high magical power score but struggle with practical skills?

“While I can proudly say that my magical power score is remarkable, on the other hand, my physical coordination is disastrous. Just walking back from here to the girls’ dormitory leaves me out of breath,” Maron-san confessed.

“Oh, that’s surprising.”

Even Maron-san, who excelled in academics, magic, and appearance, seemed to have at least one flaw.

Having difficulty with physical activities, huh?

It goes without saying what might be hindering her physical abilities.

“I see. So you compensate for the gap in practical skills with studying. It makes sense. This library is a great place for research and quiet studying.”

“Yes, that’s right. But today, I came to this library for a different reason.”

“A different reason?”

As I tilted my head, Maron-san turned the question back to me.

“Sachi-san, did you happen to see Poire-san anywhere?”

“Poire-san? Oh, you mean that friend with the yellow hat.”

Poire-san, a girl who also achieved a high magical power score like Maron-san. She always wore a pointed hat that resembled a yellow nightcap and often got scolded for dozing off during class. Though I had nicknamed her “Sleep-Deprived Girl” in my mind, I had never actually talked to her.

“She’s my roommate in the dormitory, and we made plans to go back to the girls’ dormitory together today. However, I had some business at the staff room after school, so I asked Poire-san to wait for me in the classroom. When I finished my task and went to the classroom...”

“Poire-san wasn’t there, right?”

“Y-Yes.”

\Maron-san nodded solemnly, looking worried.

I was the last one remaining in the classroom, but I vaguely remember Poire-san not being there early on.

I think I saw her sleeping at her desk at some point, but I don’t remember it very well.

“Maybe she had something to do and went back to the dormitory ahead of time? Like she didn’t have time to leave a note or anything, so she couldn’t inform you,” I suggested.

“Well, um, I know it might not be the best thing to say as a friend, but

Poire-san is basically someone who ‘can’t do anything alone’...”
Maron-san hesitated.

“Huh? Can’t do anything alone?”

“She needs someone to wake her up in the morning, or she’ll sleep forever. She’ll even try to go to school in her pajamas if someone doesn’t prepare her clothes. And even if she managed to get to school, she wouldn’t be able to find her way around without someone guiding her...”

“Really...”

It’s like a stereotypical incapable person.

I never thought Poire-san would be completely lacking in basic life skills...

No, I can actually imagine it quite easily.

The scene of Maron-san taking care of various things for Poire-san in their shared dorm room comes to mind.

“And even if she somehow manages to get to school safely, I always have to prepare the class materials for her, and she’ll stay asleep at her desk unless I guide her to the moving classrooms... and, well, during flower picking, she wouldn’t even know where to go without me taking her there...”

“Okay, okay, I get it. I understand enough.”

It seems like Maron-san takes care of Poire-san like a mother taking care of a child.

Otherwise, Poire-san wouldn’t be able to function properly.

If her life skills are that disastrous...

“In other words, it’s unlikely that she went back to the dormitory alone. Maybe she went home with other friends?”

“P-Poire-san doesn’t have any other close friends besides me...”

“Oh...”

The reason for her disappearance from the classroom becomes even more mysterious.

She can’t go home alone, she doesn’t have any friends, and yet she’s no longer in the classroom.

It feels like she vanished as if she were kidnapped.

“Moreover, I’m the only one who has the key to our room, so even if she went back, she wouldn’t be able to get in,”

Maron-san added.

In that case, it’s highly likely that she’s still somewhere in this school.

Yes, most likely. There was a time before when she sleepily wandered off to another class or got lost on a different floor with students from another grade.

So that’s why she asked me if I had seen Poire-san.

And now Maron-san is wandering around the school, searching for Poire-san, and ended up in the library.

If that’s the situation, maybe it’s my turn to help.

“I’ll help you search too.”

“Huh? A-Are you sure?”

“Yeah, I don’t have any plans for the rest of the day, and I’m pretty good at finding things. If we search for Poire-san together, we might find her faster than expected.”

“W-Well, in that case, I appreciate your help...”

As Maron-san was about to respond, she suddenly stopped mid-sentence.

She then looked around me, her gaze wandering, and tilted her head in confusion.

“Aren’t you with Mil-san today?”

“Huh, Mil?”

“I often see the two of you together...”

“Oh, if it’s about her, she’s off doing school requests alone. I offered to help, but she wanted to do it alone.”

“Doing school requests... I see. In that case, that ‘rumor’ is indeed...”

“Rumor?”

An intriguing word slipped from Maron-san’s lips.

A rumor. Could it be that someone is spreading rumors about Mil?

But what kind of rumors? I wondered, and as I questioned it, Maron-san continued, lowering her voice slightly.

“I’ll tell you as we walk. It’s about the recent rumors circulating among some students regarding Mil-sama.”

“Oh... um, okay.”

I had no idea what she was talking about, but we left the library to search for Poire-san.

Chapter 33

Rumors

The location changed, and I found myself inside the school building once again.

I was walking outside with Maron-san, trying to find Poire-san, but there was no sign of finding her anywhere.

Then my intuition told me that she was inside the school building, so we returned to the nearly empty corridors.

As Maron-san and I walked down the hallway, I couldn't help but ask about the rumor she mentioned earlier.

"So, what did you mean by the rumors about Mil?"

Maron-san looked somewhat troubled and spoke in a slightly lower voice.

"Have you heard about some students recently failing their school requests?"

"Failed requests? Oh, yeah, I think the receptionist mentioned something like that. It seems that because of that, there are more pending requests, and Mil is helping to handle them..."

"Indeed, that's the case."

Maron-san's expression grew even cloudier.

Was it really such a disadvantageous situation that Mil was helping to handle the request backlog?

I remembered hearing that she was personally asked by the school principal to assist with request completion.

“Well, um, is there something wrong with that?”

“N-No, Mil-san is not at fault. It’s just that she seems to have incurred some resentment from certain students...”

“Resentment?”

Maron-san asked again, seeking confirmation from me.

“The current requests that Mil-san is accepting are all ones that other students have failed, right?”

“Y-Yes, that’s what I’ve heard, but...”

“According to the rumors, many of those who couldn’t accomplish the requests are trying to challenge them again and sometimes visit the receptionist’s office.”

Well, that made a lot of sense.

Reattempting a subjugation request. If I had failed once, I might also visit the receptionist’s office to try again.

Because it would simply be frustrating, and it would tarnish one’s reputation as a magician.

They would want to redeem themselves by attempting the request once more.

However, once they have failed once, it’s unlikely that they would be entrusted with the same request by the receptionist.

Still, it seems that many people visit the receptionist's office as a last-ditch effort.

"But what do those who know that another student... Mil-san, has already accomplished those requests think?"

"Huh..."

After thinking for a moment, I finally understood from their perspective.

"I see. They feel like Mil took care of it for them... or rather, that she cleaned up their mess."

"...Most of the students who felt that way were in the majority."

I failed the request.

I was so frustrated that I went to accept it again.

But Mil had already resolved that request.

Knowing that fact would only fuel the flames of my frustration even more.

"Moreover, Mil, who cleaned up after me, is just a commoner without a family emblem, and she's practically the top first-year student as a scholarship student. It's no wonder she doesn't receive favorable looks," I said.

"I heard that those who felt uncomfortable started spreading unfavorable rumors about Mil-san,"

Maron-san replied, looking very hesitant.

"Unfavorable rumors? Like what, specifically?"

Maron-san seemed to struggle, but she managed to tell me.

“Things like ‘The daughter of a commoner stole the request from me, a noble’ or ‘She used her title as a scholarship student to snatch away the requests.’”

I couldn’t help but let out a dry laugh.

It was incomprehensible to me that someone would go to such petty lengths to slander Mil just because they were frustrated that she accomplished the requests instead.

Since receiving the title of a scholarship student, she had already attracted hostile looks, but I never imagined that the students would harbor such intense jealousy.

“At the moment, it’s still a story that has only spread among a few students, and I haven’t seen any direct attacks on Mil-san. But considering how rumors spread, it wouldn’t be strange if things escalate,” Maron-san explained.

“Hmm, if it looks like it’s turning into blatant bullying, it’s probably best to consult with Professor Lezan,” I mused.

I could only pray that it wouldn’t come to that.

But given her unlucky disposition, it wouldn’t be surprising if such a situation unfolded.

“Thank you for telling me, Maron-san. And sorry for making you talk about unpleasant things.”

“No problem. I’m glad if it was helpful. If I hear any rumors from people around me, I’ll make sure to leave everything to you,” Maron-san replied.

“Okay, thank you.”

I was truly grateful for Maron-san’s kindness.

Not that it was a way to repay her, but I felt even more motivated to find Poire-san, hoping to be of help.

Sensing the presence around me, I sniffed the air and continued down the corridor, leading the way, while Maron-san followed, catching her breath.

“I have a feeling she’s somewhere around here...”

“Really? Over there?”

We went up the stairs at the far end of the corridor, leading to the upper floors.

Second floor, third floor, fourth floor... we ascended, with Maron-san trying to keep up, panting for breath. And I continued further up.

“S-Sachi-san, what’s ahead...”

Keep going!

The staircase, which should have ended on the fourth floor, had a slight extension, leading to a single door.

We opened the unlocked door, and a fresh breeze passed by us as the view of the rooftop unfolded before our eyes.

As we emerged beneath the sky, which was tinged with shades of orange as the sun was setting, we immediately heard faint breathing sounds, like “sū... sū...”

When I turned around, right next to the newly opened door, I found a

female student leaning against the wall, sound asleep.

“Oh, so she was here after all.”

“She really ended up in a place like this... I’m impressed you found her.”

Well, I did find her purely based on intuition.

But my intuition was not something to be underestimated.

I’ll continue to boast about it as one of my skills for finding things.

Maron-san called out the girl’s name and approached her, and the sleeping girl slowly opened her eyes.

Then, rubbing her drowsy eyes, she looked up at Maron-san, who was in front of her.

“Huh? Maron...? What’s up?”

“What’s up? We were looking for you, Poire-san. We promised to go back together, didn’t we?”

“Is that so...? Did we?”

With a voice that made me feel sleepy just listening to it, Poire-san tilted her head.

Then, she blinked a few times, as if some of her drowsiness had dissipated, and looked around once again, raising even more question marks above her head.

“Huh? Where is this?”

“Where? Weren’t you the one who came here by yourself?”

“I don’t remember well. I remember falling asleep in the classroom, though.”

From her manner of speaking, it seemed that Poire had unconsciously ended up here while half-asleep.

According to Maron-san, she had done similar things in the past, like sleepwalking to a different classroom, so it’s possible that she had come up to the rooftop in a similar state.

She really is a mysterious girl, I thought to myself while watching Poire from behind Maron-san. Suddenly, our eyes met.

“Um, you are... uh...”

“Oh, yeah, I’m Sachi from the same class. I was looking for you with Maron-san.”

“...,” Poire unexpectedly bowed her head and replied with an unexpected line.

“I’m sorry. It’s my Maron who caused trouble...”

“Huh? If anything, you’re the one causing trouble, Poire-san.”

At that moment, Maron-san pinched Poire’s cheek and stretched it out with a playful tone.

“That’s right. She disappeared from the classroom without permission, and I was so worried, you know.”

“Th-That’s not...”

Watching them like this, they really seemed like a caring mother and a challenging daughter.

The serene scenery was too soothing, and it felt like I could watch this forever.

In any case, I was relieved that we found Poire safely.

“Thank you for your help in finding Poire-san. Thanks to you, everything is fine now.”

“Nah, no problem. It’s not a big deal. Besides, I got to hear about Mil’s situation from you.”

If I could be of help, I’m glad.

And I also received valuable information in return.

“Well then, Sachi-san. We’ll be... Oh, if it’s alright, would you like to walk back to the dormitory together?”

“Oh, yeah, sure... If it’s not too much trouble, I’ll walk with you.”

And so, I decided to walk back to the girls’ dormitory with Maron-san and Poire-san.

On the way back, I learned that they were childhood friends, and in turn, I told them about how I met Mil...

After experiencing the first time walking back with a group of people since the beginning of the school year, I felt a sense of loneliness in the quietness of my room when I finally arrived at the dormitory.

“...Hurry back,” I whispered, lying on the bed, staring at the door as if longing for my roommate’s return.

Chapter 34

Anxiety

The next morning, I learned from Mil, who had woken up before me, that she hadn't shown up for dinner yesterday and had returned to the room after I had gone to bed.

I decided to talk about it, as I had heard from Mil in the morning. It seemed that the subjugation request had dragged on yesterday, and she ended up coming back late at night.

Part of me wanted to complain about how she made me feel lonely, but instead, I played it safe and said, "Good job" to her.

I also decided to tell her what I had heard from Maron-san yesterday.

"Um, am I the subject of rumors...?"

"Yeah, that's right. It seems that there are people spreading false rumors about Mil because they can't stand that she's taking on the requests they couldn't accomplish. I wanted to let you know before it reaches your ears directly..."

Telling her directly might be less shocking than hearing it firsthand.

Although I wasn't sure if it made any difference, Mil nodded calmly.

"Taking over the requests that others have failed... Well, I can see why it might look that way."

"But Mil, you're just helping with the requests at the request of the school director. Failed requests are generally not allowed to be retried, so someone else ends up doing them anyway."

I wished I could directly confront the people spreading the rumors.

Since I had no idea where the rumors originated, I had no way of dealing with them.

I briefly considered stopping the rumors themselves, but that would be even more unrealistic.

Mil let out a self-deprecating smile and spoke in a downcast voice.

“If it were not a commoner like me but another exemplary noble student who was helping with the requests, would such rumors have spread?”

“Well, I mean...!”

I couldn't deny it.

If it were another student doing the request assistance, say, Maron-san from the Melange family, this situation probably wouldn't have happened.

It's easier to accept that it's because Mil is a commoner that she's being attacked with even more envy.

“But it's their own responsibility for failing the requests, so it's wrong to resent Mil, who is taking over for them. If they want to resent someone, they should resent their own immaturity.”

“...”

Even though I spoke logically, Mil's cloudy expression still didn't clear up.

Well, it would be strange to remain calm when you know that there are rumors about you circulating within the school.

Suddenly, as if the malice directed at Mil took shape and attacked, I found myself trembling unconsciously.

“Hey, maybe I should help with the requests too?”

“Huh?”

“I think I might be overthinking it, but there might come a time when those who don’t like Mil might directly attack her.

And even if it doesn’t go that far, they might indirectly harass her or something...”

And if she were to be harassed, it would be highly likely to happen when she’s alone during a request. No matter how capable Mil is, I have no idea what would happen if someone bothered her during a monster subjugation. It could result in the worst-case scenario of a serious injury, or even life-threatening situations.

To prevent that from happening, I suggested that I accompany her during the requests.

“But, I still want to try to accomplish this on my own. If I rely on you, Sachi-san...”

She showed signs of not wanting my help.

Ideally, I wanted to be by Mil’s side, keeping an eye on her to prevent any mischief from those mean-spirited individuals.

In an instant, a brilliant idea struck me.

“Oh, I’ve got it!”

“Huh?”

“I won’t assist with the requests as you wish, Mil. But how about I go along with you as a mere companion?”

Upon hearing that suggestion, Mil widened her eyes in surprise.

It seems that she strongly desires to accomplish this particular request on her own.

So, while she might resist having me assist her, if I were just accompanying her without interfering with her goal, it wouldn’t hinder her determination.

It might sound like a flimsy excuse, but after a brief hesitation, Mil nodded slowly in response.

“W-Well, if that’s the case...”

“Great! Then it’s settled. I’ll join you starting from tomorrow.”

With this, I can watch over Mil and ensure she doesn’t face any danger.

Additionally, I’ll have the opportunity to observe how Mil handles the subjugation requests.

Looks like I won’t have much free time from now on.

There is a grassland spreading to the west of the capital city Blossom. In the southwestern part of the grassland, there is a place where a lot of water bubble flowers bloom (T/N: called “Suibousou” in Japanese). Occasionally, bubbles the size of a person’s head would emerge from the tips of the flowers and float in the air without bursting for a while.

Due to this unique sight, this particular area is named the “Water Bubble Grassland,” distinguishing it from the ordinary grasslands.

Mil and I had come to this water bubble grassland for a subjugation request. As we heard, the place was filled with hundreds of transparent bubbles floating gently, creating a lovely view.

Then, one bubble floated softly towards us, so I lightly touched it with my fingertip. Instantly, with a satisfying snap, a faint smoke emerged from within the bubble, tickling my nostrils with a refreshing scent.

“Oh, it smells nice! If we pluck some and decorate the room with them, the whole room will have a pleasant fragrance, don’t you think?”

“There are rare cases where the bubbles cause small explosions, so it would be dangerous to display them in a room.

Also, it’s better not to touch them indiscriminately.”

“...I wish I had known that before coming here.”

Feeling a shiver run down my spine, I moved away from the softly floating bubbles. However, with their sheer number, it would be difficult to avoid all of them. I could only hope that the bubbles I touched wouldn’t explode.

“So, what are we going to do here for this request?”

“We have to subjugate a magical beast called Espuma, which is a life-draining spirit that claims territory in this area. It seems their numbers have increased recently, and they have become more aggressive, prompting the request for their subjugation.”

Espuma is a small humanoid creature with fairy-like wings growing on its back. It latches onto people attracted by the scent of water bubble flowers and drains their vitality. As Mil explained this to me, I became even more vigilant of our surroundings.

“The water bubble flowers blooming in the water bubble grassland are also used as ingredients for perfumes and deodorants. Perfumers often

come here to pick the flowers. However, with the large number of aggressive Espumas present, flower picking has become difficult. They urgently requested assistance to deal with the situation.”

“And our students failed to complete that subjugation request...”

At that moment, as we were discussing the matter, a group of palm-sized winged creatures emerged from behind the water bubbles. Not just one, but over a dozen of them. They had vibrant hair and eyes in colors like red, blue, and green, and their cheeks were adorned with twisted, eerie smiles.

They possess the ability to drain vitality from people with just a touch, so it's best to defeat them without allowing them to get close.

“In that case, I'll stay towards the back and watch over you, Mil.”

“Y-Yes.”

Mil's face tensed up, likely due to the pressure of being observed by me. However, she tightened her expression with determination and stood before the Espumas.

“W-Well then, here I go!”

Mil's determination was evident.

Although she wasn't initially enthusiastic about me accompanying her, it seemed she was now full of enthusiasm. I hope she doesn't get too carried away and waste her efforts. For now, I'll observe Mil's skills.

She poised her right hand as she faced the scene of the Espumas pouncing.

“Winter's Arrival—Transparent ice pillars—Guided by heat...”

Smooth incantation.

It was a flawless high-speed recitation without any mistakes.

However, just before she finished the incantation, a floating bubble gently touched Mil's shoulder, and as expected, it burst.

In an instant, instead of a refreshing smoke, a slight blast and explosion sound struck Mil.

“Ah!”

Pushed by the blast, Mil was slightly propelled forward, interrupting her incantation.

The explosion itself didn't seem to have much power, but there was a considerable blast and sound.

Getting up quickly from falling on the grassland, Mil once again began reciting.

“A-And Winter's Arrival—Transparent...”

But once again, a bubble floated from behind her.

As soon as it touched Mil's back, it burst violently with a bang, blowing her delicate body away once again.

And where she flew, another bubble floated, producing the same sound when touched.

Bang, bang, bang...

Before I knew it, Mil was being blown away in various directions by exploding bubbles.

“W-Why is it only around me?!”

“What is she doing...?”

The situation had become far from a magical beast subjugation.

The Espumas themselves seemed perplexed, watching Mil being toyed with by the exploding bubbles.

But seriously, why are there so many exploding bubbles only around her?

Just out of curiosity, I tried touching a nearby bubble, but all that came out was a refreshing smoke, no matter how much I poked it.

Well, that makes sense. After all, they did say that the bubbles that explode are “rare.”

Perhaps this is a stunt caused by Mil’s unfortunate nature.

If the exploding bubbles are attracted to her only because of her unlucky disposition, it oddly makes a lot of sense.

Mil, who was full of enthusiasm, was now blushing, unable to carry out the magical beast subjugation satisfactorily.

Not missing that opportunity, the Espumas once again jumped at Mil, who was trembling.

I was about to intervene instinctively, but Mil managed to position her right hand and began her incantation, determined to fend them off.

“【Winter’s Arrival—Transparent Ice Pillars—Pierce the Fools Guided by Heat】—【Cold-Blooded Ice Spear Chandel Glace】!”

In an instant, multiple large ice pillars formed around her, their sharp

tips aimed towards the approaching Espumas.

Immediately, the ice pillars were rapidly launched to intercept the attacking Espumas.

The fairies, pierced through by the sharp ice spears, met their demise with just one strike, disappearing as if melting into thin air.

What remained were only shining feathers, seemingly grown on their backs.

“...As expected, with a magic power value of 350.”

The Espumas appeared to be swift opponents with small targets to hit.

Defeating them was not an easy task for an average mage.

But utilizing her exceptional magical talent, Mil hunted down most of the Espumas with a single strike.

The destructive power, speed, and accuracy of her ice magic were unparalleled among other mages.

In addition, I noticed a certain fact and unintentionally let out an impressed sigh.

The ice pillars she unleashed had fulfilled their purpose and were now impaled in the ground, yet not a single water bubble flower, blooming beautifully, had been harmed.

“Mil, you’re amazing.”

“Huh?”

“I thought again that it’s only natural for you to be selected as a special student. Although there are many students who don’t think

highly of you, you're undoubtedly the best in our year."

"..."

As I honestly praised her, Mil seemed to have a complex expression and lowered her head.

Eventually, she brushed off the dirt from her uniform and wore a self-deprecating smile.

"I'm still far from being any good. I can't do things as cool as you, Sachi-san, and there always seems to be some kind of trouble..."

"Well, that's probably because your luck value is zero. But in the end, you're achieving the requests properly, so I don't think you should worry..."

It seemed that Mil wasn't particularly satisfied with the results of this mission.

She aspired to perform more brilliant magical beast subjugations.

Rather than being tossed around and fighting while covered in mud, her goal was to complete the job in a smart and efficient manner.

Well, it's good to have high ideals, but for now, she should be happy that everything ended safely, I think.

In any case, since we were able to defeat the target number of Espumas, we collected the feathers as proof of subjugation and decided to head back.

Just after collecting the feathers, I suddenly tilted my head as if I remembered something.

"Come to think of it, why couldn't the previous students who accepted

this request defeat the Espumas? Did they also get rolled around by exploding bubbles like Mil?”

“W-Well, I think it’s absolutely just me who ends up like that. Please don’t remind me of embarrassing things!”

Well, that’s true.

I don’t think there’s anyone else in the world who ends up in such a situation as Mil does.

So why couldn’t they achieve the Espuma subjugation?

They may be troublesome magical beasts, but these were students from the world’s top mage training institution, the Magic Academy.

“Well, I heard that the students who failed the request couldn’t activate their magic, or their destructive power was weaker than usual, something like that.”

“It sounds similar to what we heard before. I wonder if there’s any connection?”

“I-I’m not sure...”

In our previous Golem subjugation request, the previous students failed due to their magic not functioning properly.

If we consider it as a lousy excuse, then so be it. But would the other students also come up with such obvious excuses?

“Is there anything strange about this?”

“Other than the misfortune of continuously attracting exploding bubbles miraculously, there’s nothing... My magic worked normally, and the power wasn’t any different.”

“That’s right. From what I observed, there wasn’t anything strange either.”

Well, there is a possibility that the failed students just happened to be in poor condition.

There’s no point in thinking too deeply about it.

Feeling lazy to contemplate further, I lightly poked a bubble that came before me, enveloped in a refreshing scent, and left the Water Bubble grassland behind.

Chapter 35

Research Club

Harvest Magic Academy – First Floor of the Girls' Dormitory.

Three female students had gathered in a room with the number '104' displayed on the nameplate.

Among them, a girl with wavy green hair expressed her dissatisfaction while twirling her hair with her fingertips.

“Rumors about the scholarship students haven't been spreading at all.”

In response, another petite girl with aqua-colored hair calmly replied.

“Maron Melange and her faction are said to be suppressing the rumors.”

“Ugh, they just have to meddle, don't they?”

The girl with green hair, Muska Fermante, raised her eyebrows in even greater dissatisfaction.

If that Melange family's daughter is involved, it's understandable that things aren't going as planned. Many students idolize her, as she has both popularity and impeccable grades and personality, so they have become a kind of faction of their own.

Muska, annoyed that she had caught the attention of troublesome people, clicked her tongue.

And then she suddenly remembered her own blunder, furrowing her brows even more in frustration.

(Even thinking about it now makes me furious!)

During a request to subdue magical beasts, her magic suddenly stopped working and she had no choice but to retreat.

As a result, the request ended in failure, and she couldn't take on another one because she couldn't gain the trust of the receptionist.

Instead, the scholarship student Miltieu Glasse took over the request. It turns out Miltieu is taking on all the backlog of requests.

Presumably, the academy is in a bind because of the backlog of requests, and they are trying to gain favor by helping with the workload. It's a display of the kind of determination to obtain the title of a scholarship student and earn high evaluations.

Muska, who found that detestable, tried to spread rumors about Miltieu and tarnish her reputation among her close friends.

However, she never expected the daughter of the Melange family to obstruct her plans.

Seeing Muska grinding her teeth, a petite girl with pink hair, Cloze Karareji, placed her hand on her chin, lost in thought.

Then, Akaze Karareji, a girl with the same face as Cloze, leaned over and peered into Muska's face.

"What are you going to do, Muska? Are you going to stop tormenting that scholarship student?"

"There's no way I'll stop. I'll beat her until her heart is completely shattered."

From Muska's perspective, it wasn't just about having the request snatched away from her. She felt as if she had been mocked, thinking that as a scholarship student, she could easily accomplish it herself.

It infuriated her to be treated with contempt by someone who didn't even have a family crest.

Just spreading rumors wasn't enough. She would relentlessly corner her until her heart was completely shattered.

"But even if you say that, any visible pranks might catch the attention of the teachers. It might be difficult to go any further, don't you think?"

"..."

Akaze's words were correct. If they acted too boldly, they might attract the attention of the teachers. While there wouldn't be any consequences for merely spreading rumors, once they resorted to direct actions, there would be no escape.

In this academy where children from prestigious families gathered, tarnishing someone's reputation was equivalent to sully the family name.

No matter how emotional she was, Muska had to be extremely cautious about that particular aspect.

Was there any convenient plan that could break that scholarship student's heart without attracting the teachers'

attention? She pondered on that.

While thinking about it, she suddenly overheard a conversation between the Karareji sisters, Cloze and Akaze.

"By the way, Akaze, are you studying for the exams properly?"

"I am, I am. As you told me, I'm flipping through the areas that are likely to be on the exam, so I'll be fine."

“Don’t just look at them, make sure to write and memorize as well. I’ve heard that the written exams are quite challenging, although not as much as the practical exams.”

Final exams are typically divided into two types: written exams and practical exams.

During the entrance exams, we also had a written exam followed immediately by the practical exam.

As an educational institution that trains magic users specializing in subjugating magical beasts, the emphasis is placed on the practical exams. However, neglecting the written exams could also leave you vulnerable.

While Muska was considering reviewing the material for the upcoming semester, she was stimulated by the continued conversation of the Karareji sisters.

“Cloze, you’re always so worried. I’m the older sister, so everything will be fine, right?”

“Your statement just made me even more worried. I shouldn’t have forgotten, but if we fail this exam, we’ll be immediately expelled. So keep that in mind, okay?”

“Okay.”

“...”

Suddenly, Muska’s face lit up with a triumphant smile.

“Expulsion, huh? That’s an interesting idea...”

It had been half a month since I started accompanying Mil to help with her request completion.

So far, nothing particularly eventful had happened around Mil.

There were no instances of harassment from other students, nor were there any leads on the culprit behind the rumors.

It was simply peaceful days passing by.

I'm not sure if it's thanks to my presence or if the harassment group got tired of it.

For now, after half a month of accompanying Mil on her requests, this is my impression:

“It's a shame that Mil is amazing yet disappointing.”

“Di-disappointing... Well, it's the truth, so I can't argue.”

After finishing the report on the subjugation request and heading towards the entrance, Mil slumped her shoulders.

It felt a bit like adding insult to injury seeing her in a dejected state, but I continued.

“Because of her luck stat being zero, she gets involved in some kind of trouble every time, but her mana value is ridiculously high, so she forcefully resolves any disadvantageous situation with magic.”

Truly, she's an amazing yet disappointing existence.

If only she didn't have the misfortune trait, she could have become a perfectly cool magician.

I'm sure Mil herself feels regret more than anyone else.

"But, at least you've completed the requested tasks, right?"

"Yes. It seems that second and third-year students also helped, so all the pending requests have been completed."

In that case, it would be time to focus on the upcoming final exams, which are just half a month away.

Failing the exams would result in not being promoted and being expelled, so we must approach them with even more seriousness than usual.

The exams are always rumored to be difficult.

That being said, we haven't been informed about the specific format of the exams, so we can't really prepare in advance.

"If there were acquaintances among the second and third-year students who were helping with the request completion, wouldn't you have become friends with any of them?"

"No, I didn't become friends or even meet any of them. I just asked if there were any pending requests at the reception desk and took them. Besides, even if I had met them, do you think I could have become friends with them?"

"...Sorry about that."

It seems like I asked something bad.

Reflecting deeply, I placed my fingertips on my temple and let out a sigh.

"Well, if Mil had acquaintances among the second and third-year

students, I could have asked them what the first-semester final exams were like.”

“You mean studying past exam questions? I don’t think the exams will be exactly the same, but it might be better than doing nothing...”

Suddenly, Mil cut off her words and, for some reason, swiftly moved behind me, crouching down. Like a small animal fearing its natural predator, she covered her face with a blue hood and hid behind me, gazing forward.

What’s going on? I looked ahead and saw a familiar person walking towards us.

“Oh, it’s Sachi-san!”

“Oh, Maron-san! We seem to meet often.”

Maron-san, who has had many encounters with us lately, greeted us with a gentle smile. Then she noticed the figure hiding behind me, the girl in the blue hood, and let out a surprised sound.

And then she greeted Mil with a “Hello,” to which Mil responded with an extremely soft voice, “Th-thank you.”

She still had her shy personality.

Well, Mil’s misfortune trait seems to affect those around her, causing unfortunate things to happen to those who are close to her, so it’s necessary to keep a certain distance.

Thinking that it can’t be helped, I tilted my head as I observed the direction Maron-san came from.

She didn’t come from the front of the corridor but from a side passage. That caught my attention.

“Did you have some business in the West Wing? The staff room or something?”

“Oh, no, well, today I was visiting the research club. It has piqued my interest since I entered the academy, and I’m starting to get used to school life, so I thought it was a good time...”

“Oh, the research club.”

Research clubs.

These are activities where students of this academy gather with a common purpose and engage in free discussions and research. As long as you submit the required documents, anyone can establish a research club. Currently, there are around twenty or thirty clubs working towards a single objective.

If they can produce revolutionary research results, they can even present their findings at the official organization for magical academic research, commonly known as the “Magic Society,” and receive rewards for their achievements.

Maron-san seems to want to join one of these research clubs.

“Oh, Maron-san, you’re joining a research club. Which club are you interested in?”

“Um, I’m interested in the ‘Performing Arts Research Club’...”

“The Performing Arts Research Club?”

An unfamiliar name raised a question mark in my mind.

But more than that, I couldn’t help but wonder why Maron-san was blushing. She looked embarrassed.

I had no idea why, but the answer must lie within this “Performing Arts Research Club.”

“What do they do in the Performing Arts Research Club? I know about the ‘Swordsmanship Research Club’ or the

‘Martial Arts Research Club,’ but I’ve never heard of ‘Performing Arts’...”

“Well, um... Simply put, it’s about performing dance and various arts on stage.”

Dance and arts?

Standing on stage and performing in front of a large audience?

“So, it’s like a Dance Club?”

“To be more precise, it’s the ‘Magician Performing Arts Research Club.’ By incorporating magic into traditional dance and performing arts, they create even more dazzling performances. It’s still a term that hasn’t spread to all regions.”

“I see, I had no idea.”

Dance and performing arts using magic.

That’s certainly a glamorous spectacle that only magicians can create.

I knew that using magic in Kendo was called Swordsmanship, and using magic in martial arts was called Martial Arts, but I never imagined that magic could be used in dancing and performing arts.

I’d love to see it if I have the chance.

Wait, does that mean...

“So, Maron-san, you mean you’ll be dancing on stage?”

“Yes, um... I had a background in dancing when I was young...”

I understood why Maron-san was embarrassed now.

It must be embarrassing to stand on stage and dance in front of people.

Well, even if she did it when she was young, it takes courage to dance in front of everyone at this age.

Moreover, if she does it in a school research club, her peers of the same age would naturally be watching.

But Maron-san is so beautiful, and her mana value is high. I’m sure she can perform flashy and splendid dances.

“It would be so beautiful to see you dance, Maron-san... If you practice, you have to show it to me!”

“Well, um... Yes, I’ll do my best.”

Maron-san, who nodded shyly, bowed slightly and left.

As I imagined her dancing in my mind, I called out to Mil behind me.

“You know, she may have been embarrassed, but I think Maron-san is really suited for it.”

“Yeah...”

“Maybe she’ll perform during the school festival or something? If

that's the case, I really want to see it."

"...Yeah, I guess."

Mil, who was still huddled and hiding behind her blue hood, responded slowly.

"You still seem to have trouble getting along with other students, Mil-kun."

"If I become too attached to someone, I end up causing them misfortune. Sachi-san seems to have become quite close to Maron-san."

"Well, you know. A lot has happened while you were taking on missions alone."

"...I see."

Mil seemed a bit grumpy.

I couldn't quite grasp the reason.

Oh well, I thought and turned to look in the direction Maron-san had walked.

"Research clubs, huh... Hey, Mil, since we have the opportunity, how about going to watch them?"

"Huh?"

"Research clubs. We have some free time now, and it might be interesting to join one if we find something that catches our attention."

“...”

Mil responded with a somewhat gloomy expression.

“...As long as it's not the Performing Arts Research Club.”

“Huh? Why not the Performing Arts Research Club?”

“...Just because.”

Just because?

Well, I guess it's true that it would be too much for timid Mil to dance or perform on stage.

With her high mana value and proficiency in ice magic, she could certainly put on a glamorous performance.

Well, if Mil says so, let's avoid the Performing Arts Research Club and go watch other clubs.

So, off we go to the special building where the research clubs gather.

Chapter 36

Magical Tool Research Club

On the first and second floors of the West Wing, various research club laboratories are gathered.

Mil and I decided to look at the nameplates of the research clubs in order from one end of the first floor.

“There’s a Swordsmanship Club and Martial Arts Club. We usually see them practicing in the schoolyard, but I wonder what they do in the research rooms?”

“Well, I’m not sure. Maybe it’s research on sword techniques and martial arts that utilize magic?”

Well, that’s the only thing I can think of. The rooms used by the research clubs as their laboratories are essentially the same as the classrooms we use for regular classes. It’s not that spacious, so they probably conduct practical research outside.

There are also some research clubs that mostly operate outdoors.

“Magical Beast Research Club... Are they researching magical beasts?”

“But what exactly are they researching about magical beasts?”

“Well, maybe their behavior or biology?”

If we understand that, it would be easier to deal with magical beasts, and it would be important, but it doesn’t seem like a typical student club.

Compared to the Swordsmanship Club and Martial Arts Club, it lacks glamour.

However, voices of many students can be heard from inside the laboratories, and when I glanced to the side, I saw the adjacent classroom labeled “Magical Beast Research Club Second Laboratory.”

It’s surprising that it’s popular enough to require two laboratories.

Next to it is the Performing Arts Club that Maron-san mentioned, and we passed by that laboratory and continued further.

“Magical Grimoire Research Club, Catalyst Research Club, Mana Research Club, Spirit Research Club, Ruins Research Club...”

“All of them seem to be research clubs with unknown activities.”

As we went upstairs to the second floor, there were also many peculiar research clubs, and we walked down the corridor while tilting our heads.

I think they all seem like magical academy research clubs, but I don’t really understand what they do.

It would be a simple matter to visit their laboratories and observe if we were invited, but there isn’t a research club that appeals to us enough to take that step.

We’ve come to the last laboratory, and both of us sighed in unison.

“Well, they were all research clubs that we didn’t quite understand.”

“Yes, that’s right. Well, maybe they are attractive to those who look at them.”

It's just that there wasn't a research club that suited our tastes.

Probably, other students who felt the same way formed new research clubs with their desired goals, resulting in the birth of many research clubs in this academy.

Anyway, since we have finished visiting all the research clubs, we turned around to leave when...

"Hmm?"

At the far end of the corridor, I found that there was one more laboratory remaining.

Rather than saying I found it, it felt like it miraculously entered my field of vision.

The Ancient Magic Research Club is using a large classroom, and at the very end of the corridor, there is only a small storage room with a small door left.

However, even there, a nameplate for the laboratory is hanging, albeit covered in dust. I felt drawn towards that laboratory and walked towards it.

Standing in front of the worn-out door with peeling surfaces and chipped corners, I looked up at the nameplate again.

"Magical Tool Research Club."

Mil and I exchanged glances and tilted our heads in unison.

"So, this is also a laboratory, right?"

"It seems so, but why does it stand out from the other research clubs?"

“I don’t know.”

It clearly feels different, or rather, it seems to be treated poorly.

It’s as if it got pushed to the corner because of the other research clubs.

Judging from the name “Magical Tool Research Club,” it seems like they are researching magical tools.

As I absentmindedly looked up at the nameplate, suddenly, from behind the door...

“Nyaaaahhhh!”

“——Huh?! ”

With such a strange scream, we heard a loud explosion sound, and Mil and I were startled, shaking our shoulders.

Thinking that something had happened, I instinctively reached for the doorknob and opened it.

Faint black smoke and a burnt smell drifted out from inside, indicating an abnormal situation.

“Um, excuse me, are you okay...?”

Eventually, as the smoke cleared, the full view of the room became apparent.

It had a long rectangular shape, with a square black table placed in the center.

There were glass shelves on the left and right walls, and inside them

were dust-covered tools of unknown purpose.

And on the back wall, there was a small window, which a female student in a white coat was currently opening.

“Cough, cough! Geho, geho!”

The female student, who was coughing and trying to fan away the smoke with her hand, had disheveled gray hair that looked as if it hadn't been taken care of. It was slightly messy and reached below her waist.

She had dark circles around her eyes, and she wore large round glasses as if to hide them.

The uniform under her white coat had a touch of green, so she was probably a second-year student. Could she be a member of this research club?

“Hmm, who are you two...?”

Noticing our presence as we entered the room, the female student turned to us.

While glancing at Mil, who was hiding behind me again, I answered the girl in the white coat.

“Well, we came to visit the research club, and we heard an explosion sound from inside, so we got curious and rushed in.”

“Oh, sorry about that. It's something that often happens during research. Other members of the research clubs are aware of it, so it never causes a commotion...”

She was about to say something, but she suddenly stopped talking.

Then her eyes widened, and she quickly ran towards us at an incredible speed.

“Y-You said you came to visit the research club, right?!”

“Uh... yes.”

“Could it be that you’re interested in the Magical Tool Research Club?!”

“Oh, no, it’s just that...”

It’s true that we came to visit, but it doesn’t mean we entered the laboratory out of interest.

Before I could explain, the girl in the white coat interrupted and trembled with excitement.

“Finally, a long-awaited new member...! Will I finally be able to create magical tools with my comrades...?!”

“Um, I’m sorry to interrupt your excitement, but we didn’t actually come here specifically to visit this place...”

The girl in the white coat looked stunned.

“Huh, really...?”

“We were just curious about what kind of research clubs exist, so we came to stand in front of the door...”

To be honest, when I told her the truth, the girl in the white coat visibly deflated and lowered her head.

Then, she slumped to the floor, letting out a dry laugh.

“H-Hahaha, I see. There’s no way there would be new students who want to join this unpopular research club. And yet, I misunderstood and got carried away by myself... Ugh!”

“No, um, actually, maybe we can just listen to your story...”

In an instant, the girl in the white coat raised her face with glasses on, and her eyes above the dark circles sparkled.

“R-Really?! You’re willing to listen to me, even if it’s just for a conversation? Then please wait right there, I’ll prepare some tea right away!”

“She’s quite busy, huh?”

Watching the senior hurriedly moving around, I and Mil took seats on nearby chairs.

After a short wait, the senior with black and white hair came back with tea and sweets for the both of us, offering them with an elated expression that seemed to say she had been wanting to do this for a long time.

Since we couldn’t just back out now, I and Mil took a sip of the tea.

It was delicious, and the accompanying baked sweets complemented it well. However, the senior kept staring at us intently, which made it hard to relax.

Having tea time in this storage room-like space felt quite out of place, so I thought I should wrap up the conversation as soon as possible.

“If I may ask, did the explosion earlier happen during the creation of magical tools?”

“Yes, that’s right. I often make the same mistakes. I miscalculate the proportions when mixing materials such as magical beast

components...”

I had a hunch, but it seemed that this person was quite absent-minded.

I glanced up and noticed that the ceiling was covered in soot, revealing the numerous experiment failures.

Anyway, onto the next question.

“The Magical Tool Research Club, is it a research club that invents magical tools?”

“More accurately, it’s research from coming up with ideas to creating and testing. Ah, but we don’t have strict rules.

Basically, we just do whatever we want. I’m just making magical tools that come to mind and playing with them.”

“So, the research club is quite lenient. By the way, why is this the only research club that uses a storage room as its laboratory? It’s falling apart in places, and there are no other members...”

The question that I had from the moment I saw this laboratory.

It was clear that it was in a worse condition compared to the other research clubs.

Also, I couldn’t see any other members besides the senior, so I asked what was going on. The senior’s eyes looked a little lonely as she answered.

“There’s no one else here. The Magical Tool Research Club has only me now.”

“Huh?”

“It seems like it was a research club that was established about ten years ago, but no one joined the club until the founder graduated, so the name was just left behind. Then, I took it over and reestablished the club.”

Then, she looked around the small room and smiled with a hint of self-derision.

“So, even though I opened it, no one wanted to join, and this room was just assigned as the research club’s space because it was an unused storage room. It’s not really a prestigious research club or anything.”

“Why are there so few members, though? From what I can see, there doesn’t seem to be a significant difference compared to the other research clubs.”

Although the themes of their research may differ, it’s still related to magic, so I wouldn’t find it strange if people were interested.

That’s what I thought, but apparently, there was a deeper reason behind it.

“What do you think about magical tools?”

“Huh? Magical tools? I just think they’re useful tools, to be honest...”

“I see, that’s good. I wonder if you grew up surrounded by incredibly useful magical tools, or maybe you’re from a rural area where you’ve hardly seen any magical tools. Either way, I’m glad you said that.”

What does she mean?

The way I perceive magical tools as extremely useful tools... Could it be that I’m mistaken?

Even thinking back to my life with Mulberry, magical tools seem to be

essential items that help with daily life.

“Ordinary people who grew up in the capital or towns are somewhat used to magical tools, so they don’t find them particularly unusual. And they also understand the limitations of what magical tools can do, so they don’t have excessive expectations. It’s even more true for the students of this academy.”

“Why are the students of this academy less interested in magical tools?”

“In a nutshell, magical tools are not for magicians, but for non-magicians.”

Not for magicians, but for non-magicians.

That certainly makes sense.

Magicians can manipulate the once-supernatural power of magic with their own hands.

However, for those with low magical power or no formal education, magic is still an extraordinary power.

And magical tools are what allow anyone to handle that kind of power freely.

But still, for magicians who can produce supernatural phenomena themselves, magical tools don’t seem to hold much value.

“Research on swordsmanship or spell books is considered valuable in this academy because they benefit magicians. But since magical tools are for non-magicians without magical talent, they are not valued much here. The academy doesn’t provide much research funding for us, and the students’ interest has shifted elsewhere. No one would think of joining a research club like this.”

The self-made magical tools that Mulberry used at home were all amazing.

Thanks to them, we could live comfortably in the small cabin in the outskirts of town, almost on par with the luxury residences in the capital.

Perhaps creating practical magical tools like that isn't as easy as it seems.

Come to think of it, Mil's father also worked on creating magical tools independently, but he mentioned that making small tools was already a challenge.

It seems he believes that spending valuable time during student life on tool-making that may or may not be useful is much more meaningful to focus on studying swordsmanship or spell books.

After all, this is a school for improving as magicians.

"Most things that can be achieved with magical tools can also be done by most magicians. People who can enter this academy would particularly see no value in anything other than junk."

"In that case, why did you want to join this Magical Tool Research Club, which only had its name left?"

"Simply because I love magical tools. Also, my family has been criticized by others, so I wanted to prove them wrong..."

"...?"

"Family?"

As I furrowed my brows, my senior continued to explain.

“My family was once celebrated for their achievements in magical tool development. However, the truth is that those magical tools were developed through a joint effort with another prestigious family, with the majority of the production carried out by them.”

“Huh...”

“But they proposed to split the development results evenly, which allowed us to gain recognition. However, people around us would whisper behind our backs, saying things like ‘They’re just a piece of fish droppings that benefited from others’ success.’ It’s true to some extent, but it’s also true that our family was involved in the development. I didn’t want our family to be criticized any further...”

“So you wanted to create an amazing magical tool and prove them wrong?”

“Yeah, something like that.”

...I see.

Now I understand why my senior is working so hard in the Magical Tool Research Club and why she is such a strong person.

I don’t have many fond memories of my own family, so I wouldn’t feel anything even if they were criticized. But if it were Mulberry, I can’t imagine how it would affect her. It would be unbearable.

Perhaps if it were Mulberry, she might have started her own Magical Tool Research Club, fully engrossed in the study of magical tools, with the intention of proving others wrong someday.

“Haha, sorry for sharing such a gloomy story. And yet, you listened quietly. Thank you so much.”

“No, it’s nothing...”

“Both of you, please join a more reputable research club. Otherwise, you’ll be looked at with strange eyes, just like me.”

Saying that, my senior started to tidy up the finished tea.

She probably didn’t want us to stay here any longer.

At first, she may have intended to invite us to join her research club, but as she spoke, she may have become more sober. She might be worried that if she lets us join her club, we would be looked down upon by others.

Unable to say anything, I froze. Then, unexpectedly, from behind me, a voice so small it almost got drowned out by the breeze through the window reached my ears.

“I-I want to join this research club.”

“...Huh?”

“I want to join the Magical Tool Research Club, please.”

When I turned around, Mil had a determined expression, as if she had made up her mind.

Chapter 37

Joining the Club

“Wait, did that girl with the blue hair just say she wants to join the Magical Tool Research Club... even after hearing all that?”

My senior leaned forward, her eyes wide with surprise, and directed her question towards Mil, who was sitting hunched over, hiding behind my back.

Feeling the pressure, Mil shrunk back, but still nodded in response.

“Y-Yes, I said it.”

“R-Really? You really want to join the Magical Tool Research Club, even after hearing all that?”

“If... if it's not too much trouble...”

“Why... why would you...?”

“I've always been interested in magical tool creation. And since my father was a magical tool artisan, I thought I'd give it a try myself...”

My senior's eyes widened in astonishment, and she blinked slowly for a moment.

Then, she walked slowly past me, extending her arms suddenly and leaping onto Mil.

“Thank you, Little Red Riding Hood! I was feeling so alone all by myself!”

“W-Wait, this was my own decision, so... I don't think there's a need

for you to thank me...!”

“Um, senior, Mil is extremely shy, so it would be appreciated if you let her go...”

Upon hearing my words, my senior panicked and quickly released Mil, her face turning bright red.

“S-Sorry! I got carried away when I found out a new member would be joining! “

“...N-No need to apologize.”

“We lost most of the new recruits to other attractive research clubs, so I had almost given up hope of anyone joining us.

But I’m really glad you two waited.”

Suddenly, my senior remembered something and spoke up.

“By the way, we haven’t properly introduced ourselves yet. I’m Pita Jia Insalata, a second-year student.”

“I-I’m Milyu Glace, a first-year... nice to meet you.”

“I see. So that’s why you’re called Mil. Nice to meet you, Mil-kun.”

Mil hesitated for a moment but eventually reached out and firmly shook the extended hand.

Caught off guard by the sudden turn of events, my consciousness was left behind.

Mil, who had always avoided getting involved with others as much as possible, had voluntarily stepped into an environment like the

research club, where interactions with others would be most frequent in this school.

To an outside observer, it may not seem like a significant moment, but to me, it felt like a big step.

Feeling a secret sense of admiration, Pita Jia, the senior who introduced herself, turned her gaze towards us once again.

“If you’re okay with it, how about you too?”

“Huh, me?”

“I’ve been talking about all the downsides of the Magical Tool Research Club, so you might not find it appealing, but if it’s not a bother, would you be willing to help liven up the club?”

“Well, I...”

In an instant, Mil firmly grabbed onto my right arm.

When I turned to look, Mil had a gaze like a frightened small animal and sent me a pleading look.

I had mentioned that I wanted to join, but with how enthusiastically my senior approached us, perhaps she wanted someone to rely on.

Besides, it would be more reassuring to have a familiar face with me rather than joining alone.

Well, there weren’t any other research clubs I wanted to join, so I didn’t mind.

“Then, um, I’ll join too.”

And just like that, I ended up joining the Magical Tool Research Club.

I'm weak when it comes to Mil's troubled expression.

Well, I understand that it might be a little concerning to join a club with an unclear activity status, but Pita Jia-senpai seems like a nice person, so it should be fine.

There don't seem to be any complicated rules in the club, and it shouldn't interfere with my school life.

Oh, right. I remembered something at that moment.

"Um, Pita Jia-senpai."

"Hmm? Do you have a question for your senpai already?"

"Um, well..."

Pita Jia-senpai had a delighted expression, so I decided to ask her something that had been on my mind.

"When you were a first-year, what kind of things did you do for the end-of-semester exams?"

"The exams?"

"I can more or less imagine what the written exams are like, but I'm curious about the practical exams."

Pita Jia-senpai seemed surprised for a moment before responding.

"Practical exams, huh?"

The end-of-semester exams, which would serve as the first major filter in the Magic Academy, were approaching in two weeks.

I had been thinking about hearing from senior students in their second and third years about how to prepare for the exams, so I took this opportunity to ask Pita Jia-senpai.

If I could learn about the past exam contents, it might help me prepare to some extent.

“Come to think of it, I wonder what we did back then. I was only focused on livening up the club, so I didn’t pay much attention.”

“But you were able to pass the exams and advance to the second year. So it wasn’t that difficult?”

“Well, I wouldn’t say it was easy. Both the written and practical exams seemed challenging for everyone, and there were some students who dropped out as well.”

So there were indeed students who dropped out.

Well, that’s understandable. Even though we’re enjoying our school life every day, this is still the world’s top Magic Academy.

If you perform poorly in the exams, it would be determined that you don’t have the aptitude to become a mage, and you would be expelled strictly.

The approaching end-of-semester exams once again filled me with anxiety.

As I was contemplating that, Pita Jia-senpai suddenly widened her eyes.

“Oh, I remembered! I remembered! The practical exam I took for the

first time was a chase game with the teacher.”

“A chase game?”

“It was a pursuit test where the teacher played the role of a fugitive. They said that as national mages, we might have to chase down criminals, so it was an exam designed with that in mind.”

The duties of national mages span various areas.

The main ones known to the public are subduing magical beasts, researching magic, exploring unexplored territories, and capturing criminals.

Choosing “pursuing a fugitive” as an exam to verify whether one is capable of fulfilling those duties is reasonable.

I’ve heard that among criminals, there are those who possess magical abilities at the level of national mages, so it’s crucial to be accustomed to combat against magic users.

So, will our end-of-semester exams be something like that too?

“Oh, but in the end-of-semester exams of the second semester, it was a regular exam for subduing magical beasts. And in the previous year’s exams, they did something completely different, so the previous year’s exam content might not be very helpful.”

Ah, I guess that makes sense.

It’s unlikely for them to repeat the same exam.

If that’s the case, it seems difficult to come up with specific strategies, so we’ll probably have to tackle it head-on when the time comes.

Well, I got to ask what I wanted to know, and the sun was starting to

set outside, so I should take my leave soon.

After receiving a brief explanation about the club, Mil and I left the club room.

Chapter 38

Researching Magical Tools

From the day we joined the research club, Mil and I started visiting the lab whenever we had free time.

We had completed the school requests and earned enough points, so we had some flexibility in our schedule.

While we still had to study for the end-of-semester exams, we could do that in the lab.

Moreover, since there was a senior like Pita Jia who had overcome the exams in her first year, we could consult her immediately if we were in trouble.

Not to mention, it was quiet and there was no one else around. This place was the perfect study environment.

And being in the Magical Tools Research Club, it was never boring.

“Haha! I’m a genius after all! I’ve come up with another incredible invention!”

“Um... Is it that pen you’re holding?”

“Exactly! I saw you guys studying and suddenly got an idea!”

Over the past few days since joining the club, I had gradually come to understand this senior in a lab coat.

Pita Jia-senpai had an extraordinary love for magical tools.

She would even sacrifice her sleep to immerse herself in research and

creation, often resulting in dark circles under her eyes.

Unfortunately, her thought process, or rather her sense, leaned slightly towards the negative.

“A pen that can emit light, allowing you to study even in dark places! It can illuminate without using fire, and the operation is as simple as pressing the button on the end of the pen, making it easy for even children to use!”

“...Couldn't you just rely on regular lighting?”

Despite my comment, I decided to give it a try.

Click.

As I pressed the button, the pen Pita Jia-senpai invented brightly lit up as if it were a light source itself.

“Oh, indeed, it's bright and useful. It could be really handy when you can't use regular lighting...”

Just as I was about to continue my sentence, I realized a little too late.

The hand holding the pen was burning intensely, as if it were being pressed against a hot iron.

“Ouch! What's with this pen? It's ridiculously hot!”

“Huh? No, that shouldn't... Ouch! It seems that the scales of the magical beast I used to produce the light are emitting heat along with the light!”

Naturally, I couldn't study with such a thing, so I pitied the discarded glowing pen and returned to my studies.

That's how it went. Pita Jia-senpai was a researcher who constantly produced nothing but failed inventions.

Occasionally, she managed to create a practical magical tool, but for the most part, they were full of defects.

"I thought it was a good idea, but it seems to have failed again. Oh well, like all the other failed creations, I'll put it on the shelf in the lab as a reminder to myself."

"Are all those dusty items lined up on the shelf inside failed creations?"

No wonder there were so many mysterious and unidentifiable tools placed there.

At first glance, it was impossible to tell what kind of tool they were, and I couldn't even realize they were magical tools.

"These are all my inventions, you could say they're like children. By using these as fuel, I will eventually create revolutionary magical tools and carve my name into history as a genius inventor."

"Revolutionary magical tools... Didn't you say that most magicians can do what magical tools can do?"

"That's true for ordinary magical tools. However, there are certainly inexplicable, revolutionary magical tools in the world that break even the norms of magicians. I have no doubt that I will be the one to create such revolutionary magical tools," Pita Jia-senpai replied.

"...And you, who accumulate this mountain of failed creations, will be the one?" I couldn't help but let those words slip.

Pita Jia-senpai collapsed to her knees, seemingly disheartened. Feeling sorry, I tried to rush over and say, "I'm sorry,"

but...

“...I actually quite like Pita Jia-senpai’s magical tools,” Mil, who had been quietly reading her study materials next to me, murmured softly.

As soon as she said that, she covered her mouth and exclaimed, as if she hadn’t intended to say those words.

However, Pita Jia-senpai, in her dejected state, seemed to hear it as words of encouragement. She raised her head, and tears welled up in her round glasses-covered eyes.

“Oh, Mi...Mil-kun, you understand the value of these creations...! It seems that those who share the spirit of magical tool creation can communicate with each other!”

“No, it’s not like that...”

While Mil showed an indifferent attitude, Pita Jia-senpai was overwhelmed with emotion.

Eventually, she mustered her spirits and smiled.

“Thanks to Mil-kun, my motivation has grown even stronger! I must go gather materials to start a new creation!”

With a grand gesture, she dashed out of the lab.

As I watched her figure disappear, I rested my cheek on my hand and smiled wryly.

“Pita Jia-senpai really loves creating magical tools. But I wonder if she’s okay with studying for the end-of-semester exams...?”

“Well, who knows?”

Well, she's already in her second year, so she must have achieved decent grades. There's probably no need to worry unnecessarily.

With that in mind, I decided to return to my own exam preparations.

In the tranquil lab, now devoid of Pita Jia-senpai, Mil and I diligently focused on our studies.

As time passed, I turned to the side and found myself gazing at Mil, who continued to concentrate on her study materials. Unintentionally, I couldn't help but smile wryly.

Noticing my gaze, Mil glanced at me for a moment and asked, "What is it?"

"Oh, it's nothing. I just thought that it wouldn't hurt to get a little closer to Pita Jia-senpai."

And with that, Mil frowned as if I had touched a sensitive spot.

So she deliberately maintained a distant attitude towards Pita Jia-senpai, not directly facing her when talking and often addressing me instead.

"Unlike when you talk to me, it's clear that you're trying to keep your distance from Pita Jia-senpai. You rarely engage with her directly, and when you do, you often talk through me," I pointed out.

"...Because if I get too close to someone, I end up bringing them misfortune," Mil replied.

She's still concerned about that, considering her past experience of bringing unhappiness to her friends. It's understandable that she worries and feels anxious about it. And precisely because Pita Jia-senpai is a good person, it must make it even more difficult for Mil to interact with her.

“But then why did you willingly join this research club? I’ve been curious about that for a while. There was a possibility of involving Pita Jia-senpai in unhappiness, so was there a special reason?” I asked.

As someone who has avoided contact with others, I had been curious about why Mil decided to join the research club. If she didn’t want to interact with anyone, it would have been better to remain unaffiliated and quietly focus on her own studies.

“As I told Pita Jia-senpai, it’s true that my father was a magical tool craftsman, and I have had an interest in magical tool creation. There was indeed a risk of involving Pita Jia-senpai in unhappiness, but I thought it would be fine if I didn’t interact with her too much...” Mil explained.

“But it’s impossible to be in the same research club and not interact,” I pointed out.

At this point, it feels more like we’re not in the same research club but rather two strangers working on separate research in the same room. But well, if interacting closely with someone would only bring them unhappiness, there really isn’t any other choice.

After hearing that, I suddenly remembered something.

“Could it be that you brought me into the research club for that reason?” I asked.

“N-No, I just thought it would be fun to study magical tools together with you, Sachi-san...” Mil replied, trying to divert the conversation.

What a half-hearted excuse. She must have grabbed my arm to minimize direct contact with Pita Jia-senpai. She wanted to maintain the appearance of ignoring her as much as possible.

Staring at Mil with narrowed eyes, I continued.

“Furthermore, you mentioned that you wanted to help liven up the

research club because you saw similarities between Pita Jia-senpai, who diligently works on magical tool creation alone, and your late father. That was the main reason, right?"

"Yes, that's true. And also, I've been thinking for a while that I'd like to repair this," Mil said, reaching into her pocket and pulling out a small cloth bundle.

When she unfolded it, inside were sparkling pieces of glass-like fragments.

"I've been wanting to repair this because I've cherished it for a long time."

"That....," I murmured.

It was a piece of the pendant that had been crushed under the foot of that detestable noble brat, Kaïen Sifonard. The fragment could no longer be called a pendant, as only shattered pieces remained, carefully wrapped in the cloth.

She must have picked up the broken pieces after the pendant was destroyed.

"If you take it to a specialized magical tool shop, they could probably fix it for you. But I'd rather restore it myself," Mil explained.

"So, you joined the magical tool research club to learn about magical tool creation," I deduced.

"Yes. That's why I ended up involving you, Sachi-san, as an assistant, and I'm truly sorry for that."

"Oh, it's fine, really. I was also a little interested in the magical tool research club, and I felt the same way when I heard Pita Jia-senpai's story, so I understand," I reassured her.

If there's such an important reason, she should have told me about it. I already know how much Mil values that pendant. If she wants to join the magical tool research club to repair it herself, I'd gladly support her. Besides, as someone who has witnessed Mulberry-san's outrageous magical tools, I truly am interested in magical tool creation.

"But we probably won't be able to fully dedicate ourselves to magical tool research until we pass the end-of-semester exams," I added.

"That's right. If we end up getting expelled during that time, joining the research club will be meaningless," Mil agreed.

And so, we focused even more on our exam preparations.

Chapter 39

Final Exams

As we continued our days with classes, studying, and the research club, half a month had quietly passed. And now, we were finally approaching the day of the final exams.

First was the written exam on the first day. It wasn't particularly challenging if you had reviewed the material covered in the semester. Thanks to diligently studying until now, I felt confident that I hadn't missed anything.

But the real challenge lay ahead—the practical exam on the second day. The tension in the air was palpable, and I found myself getting sweaty palms even though I wasn't the one taking the exam.

We gathered with the entire first-year class in the schoolyard, waiting. Soon, a teacher stepped up onto the platform and raised his voice.

"I'm Hynberelle, the teacher in charge of the first-year Class C. I'll be overseeing the practical exam. Nice to meet you all!"

He was a male teacher with short reddish-brown hair, and he had the appearance of a passionate teacher straight out of a picture book.

Hynberelle-sensei proceeded to explain the details of the practical exam.

"The task assigned to all of you for this practical exam is 'Traversing the Untamed Wilderness.'"

Everyone reacted with confusion. It wasn't as straightforward as "Defeat this monster" or "Retrieve this item," so naturally, our interest was piqued.

“In simple terms, you just need to make it through the designated forest. There’s no need to retrieve or defeat anything.

As long as you reach the target location from the starting point within the time limit, the exam will be considered complete.”

Just make it through the designated forest. When put that way, it seemed like a straightforward exam. Pita Jia-senpai had mentioned that the previous year’s exam was a game of “tag” where the students had to catch a fleeing teacher. If I recall correctly, she referred to it as a test where the teacher played the role of a fugitive.

In that case, this year’s exam could be seen as a game of “chase”? No, since the emphasis is on traversing the forest and not on racing against time, it could be likened to a game of “exploration.”

Why did the exam content end up like this?

“Lately, the country has been focusing on exploring untamed regions, and the school wishes to instill the basics of that into the students. That’s why the exam has been designed this way,” Hynberelle-sensei explained.

As one of the responsibilities of national magicians, exploring untamed regions was included. Untouched territories were home to ferocious magical beasts and unknown disasters, so restricted areas were established to limit entry.

However, these untamed regions were also said to contain special medicinal herbs and undiscovered materials, which prompted magicians to venture into these unexplored lands.

It seemed that the importance of exploring untamed regions had been emphasized recently, which led to the content of the final exam reflecting that. In other words, the exam aimed to test our ability to traverse uncharted territories.

“The exam will take place in the ‘Nichi Shirazu Forest,’ located to the northwest of the capital city. The dense trees are covered with leaves that provide high shade, making the forest constantly dark, as if it

were midnight,” Hynberelle-sensei explained.

The students naturally turned their gaze toward the northwest. After clearing his throat to regain their attention, Hynberelle-sensei continued his explanation.

“Not only is there no source of light, but there are also no clear paths. It’s a place that’s extremely easy to get lost in, and there are many troublesome magical beasts roaming around. Don’t expect to easily navigate through the forest,” he warned.

Then, Hynberelle-sensei picked up a simple box placed beside him and showed it to the students.

“The starting point is on the east side of the forest, and you’ll need to aim for the west side as your destination. All first-year students will start together, so it’s essential to spread out at the starting point. The specific starting points will be determined by drawing lots. There is no difference in the distance to the destination, and there are no advantages or disadvantages based on the points. It’s fair in that aspect, so rest assured.”

The allocation of starting points through a lottery seemed necessary considering the number of students. If everyone freely entered the forest, it wouldn’t be fair. If, for example, close friends ended up starting together, it would create an overwhelmingly advantageous situation for those who had formed such groups.

Although Hynberelle-sensei couldn’t peer into our thoughts, he added another remark.

“Well, it’s possible to join up with another student inside, but I have to be honest—it’s not very practical.”

After hearing that, I thought, “Indeed.” Trying to meet up with someone in the easily disorienting forest would be quite challenging. The starting points were determined by lottery, and even if you managed to meet up with someone, there wouldn’t be much advantage. In the end, the exam’s objective was simply reaching the

goal, so the only advantage would be the smoother dispatch of magical beasts.

Using effort to meet up with others might be better spent on making progress toward the goal.

“By the way, the use of teleportation magic to move through the forest or directly aim for the destination is prohibited.

Well, we’ve set up a barrier with magic cast by the instructors to prevent that kind of cheating,” Hynberelle-sensei added.

The exam was about exploring the challenging forest and making it through. If teleportation magic were allowed, it wouldn’t be much of an exam. Well, teleportation magic wasn’t that convenient to begin with, as it required a high level of magical power to cover long distances. Even national magicians had their hands full just teleporting from one end of a town to another.

There were teleportation spells that allowed you to travel to a previously visited location or recorded coordinates, making it feasible to cover long distances effortlessly. However, they didn’t seem useful for this exam. Moreover, a barrier had been set up to prevent teleportation magic.

But...

“Can I use ‘that magic?’” I murmured to myself.

Just as I uttered those words, Hynberelle-sensei’s voice rang out again.

“Well, just like during the entrance exam, any injuries or accidents during the test are your responsibility. If you feel inadequate, it’s better to immediately leave the forest and forfeit,” Hynberelle-sensei reminded us.

It seemed that everyone was already aware of that, as no one showed any signs of hesitation or fear.

“Well, that’s all for the brief explanation. If you have any other questions, feel free to ask the accompanying instructors on your way to the test site. They should be able to answer within their capacity,” Hynberelle-sensei concluded.

With that, the explanation of the practical exam in the schoolyard came to an end, and we divided into our respective classes to make our way towards the Nichi Shirazu Forest.

After a two-hour ride in a carriage through the grasslands, we arrived at the Nichi Shirazu Forest, which would serve as the test site.

Even though we were still outside the forest, we could already feel the darkness and dampness that pervaded its interior.

The forest itself extended widely, its overall scope elusive.

As soon as we arrived at the entrance, we held a lottery to determine the starting points.

The lottery was conducted simply by drawing lots.

Inside the box held by Hynberelle-sensei were pieces of paper with numbers written on them, and those numbers determined our starting points.

Once all the first-year students finished the drawing, we each received a compass for the exam, and the practical portion of the final exam was about to begin.

“Now, everyone, head towards your designated starting points,” Hynberelle-sensei instructed.

Students with lottery numbers below 150 headed to the north side of the entrance, while those with higher numbers went to the south.

The Nichi Shirazu Forest was quite vast, and it was a challenge just to reach the starting points.

Well, it was to be expected, considering that all the first-year students were taking the exam in the same location.

Along the way, amidst the crowd of students, I caught a glimpse of familiar blue hair.

“Ah, Mil!”

I ran over, and Mil’s eyes widened slightly in surprise.

“Sachi-san, you’re over here too?”

“What a coincidence. Could it be that our starting points are very close?”

I looked at the paper Mil was holding, and it had the number ‘260’ written on it.

As for the paper I held, it had the number ‘247’.

Among the hundreds of first-year students, it was unexpected that our starting points would differ by only a dozen or so.

“Oh, this must be the power of my Luck stat at 999...”

“Does that really have anything to do with it?”

While it’s hard to say for sure, it’s hard to deny that it’s fortunate to have such close starting points. With this, I can quickly meet up with Mil and work together to reach the destination.

Although we were told that it’s not realistic to meet up with other students, if our starting points are this close, we should be able to meet up easily.

“When the test starts, I’ll head towards where Mil is right away. I’m not sure what the inside of the forest will be like, but I’ll try to make sure Mil stays put...”

“...”

I spoke as if it was natural for us to cooperate, but Mil had a complicated expression and hesitantly shook her head.

“No, please let me do this one on my own.”

“Huh?”

“For this test, I want to try and overcome it on my own.”

Mil’s unexpected response tightened her expression as if she had made a life-or-death decision.

Chapter 40

The unfortunate one shall overcome this test, on her own...!

As Mil entered the forest, her determination to prove herself resolute, she couldn't help but be struck by the darkness that enveloped the surroundings. The forest's interior was as dark as the midnight hour, despite the sunny and bright atmosphere outside. The leaves on the trees acted as a shield, blocking out the sunlight completely. Mil silently marveled at the accuracy of the forest's name, "Nichi Shirazu," meaning "unknown to the sun."

Realizing she couldn't afford to stand still, Mil immediately activated a spell to create a radiant light near her right shoulder. The gentle glow illuminated the otherwise pitch-black forest, and she noticed faint lights appearing from the right and left as well. It seemed that other students had also used magic to secure a source of light.

With a newfound clarity in the illuminated forest path, Mil took a deep breath and started running with determination.

She knew her current location was on the east side of the forest, while the destination lay on the opposite west side. By following the straight path and keeping her eyes on the goal, she believed she could make it.

Drawing her compass from her pocket, Mil ran straight ahead, focusing solely on reaching the destination. The test was straightforward: traverse the Nichi Shirazu Forest from the east side to the west side. With a time limit of three hours and a prohibition on using teleportation magic or leaving the forest without valid reasons, the exam itself wasn't overly difficult as long as one exercised caution.

Although the forest was said to be home to dangerous beasts and unknown disasters, Mil was confident in her combat skills and believed she could handle any challenges that arose. If there was any concern, it was her own unfortunate disposition, as if she were cursed by the gods themselves.

“Even on my own, I will undoubtedly overcome this test...!”

So far, I’ve relied on Sachi countless times for help. In order to break free from that dependency, I resolved to complete the academy requests on my own and manage to get through them somehow. However, in the end, when it came to joining the Research Club, I found myself relying on Sachi again. I was anxious about entering the Magic Tools Club alone and unconsciously grabbed onto Sachi’s arm. Deep down, I’m still seeking comfort from her.

In the future, Sachi won’t always be by my side, so I have to become capable of overcoming challenges on my own.

Otherwise, I won’t stand a chance at becoming a National Mage.

As I reconsidered my resolve while running through the forest, a large shadow suddenly leapt out from the nearby bushes. I instinctively stepped back and focused my attention on the looming figure before me. It was a massive snake adorned in jet-black scales, blending seamlessly into the darkness of the forest.

The colossal snake, larger than a grown man, coiled its long tail like a spring. In an instant, it forcefully kicked the ground and lunged at me with tremendous speed.

“[The Winter’s Arrival—Translucent Ice Pillars—Pierce Through the Fools Enveloped by Heat]—[Frigid Ice Lance Chandel Glace]!”

Swiftly stepping back while completing the incantation, I unleashed my magic. Dozens of colossal ice pillars manifested around me and soared toward the serpent, intercepting its attack. Combined with the force of the serpent’s charge, the ice pillars pierced deeply into its scales.

“Shaa...aa...!”

The obsidian serpent collapsed to the ground, lifeless. Confirming its demise, I let out a small exhale and surveyed my surroundings. If an

attack were to suddenly come from the darkness like that, it would undoubtedly catch me off guard.

Determining that it would be wise to employ detection magic, I immediately began chanting.

“[The Approaching Shadows—Insect’s Whisper—Expose the Hidden Malice]—[Gust of News Pelfe Alert]!”

This magic activated and sharpened my senses, allowing me to perceive the unique magical resonance often found within magical beasts. With it, I could anticipate the presence of magical beasts that might ambush me from the darkness.

Based on the strength of the creature I just fought, I don’t think there will be any significantly stronger magical beasts.

As long as I don’t make any major mistakes, I should be able to traverse the forest without much trouble. However, there was one factor that could lead to such a major mistake, and that was a single thing I possessed.

Just as I was about to resume walking...

“Aah!”

I tripped over a tree root, tumbling clumsily to the ground. With an unfortunate “thud,” the compass I held in my hand flew out and disappeared into the distant darkness. I hurriedly rushed to the direction it went, but there was no sign of the compass anywhere.

“This... This is the worst...”

Losing the compass, which was my lifeline, caused a cold sweat to pour down my face. Without it, I had no idea of the location of the target destination. It was unimaginable to blindly wander through the forest and hope to reach it. I had to recover the compass no matter what, even if it meant wasting a significant portion of the limited

time.

“As usual, I’m having no luck, huh?”

I was well aware of my unfortunate disposition. However, this incident made me truly understand that I was an incredibly unlucky girl. Usually, Sachi would be by my side, mitigating the effects of my bad luck. But as soon as I was alone, this is what happened.

Nevertheless, I had no time to be discouraged. I immediately decided to continue searching for the compass. I checked under tree roots, within bushes, and even climbed nearby trees, desperately hoping to find it. But it was nowhere to be found, and my growing sense of panic made me increasingly anxious.

Eventually, around thirty minutes had passed, and I still couldn’t locate the compass I had been provided. I began to fear the worst—failing the exam due to time running out—when...

“Are you looking for this?”

“Huh...?”

Suddenly, a green-haired girl emerged from the darkness. Her disheveled uniform and flashy accessories made her quite the contrasting figure to me. In her hand was the compass I had been searching for nearly thirty minutes.

My heart raced, and for a moment, I felt the urge to leap at it. But I quickly restrained myself. The girl, ostentatiously holding up the compass, wore a mischievous smile and emitted an air of unapproachability.

Sensing the unsettling atmosphere, I broke into a cold sweat and nervously asked:

“Y-you picked it up for me?”

When faced with my trembling question, the green-haired girl's smile deepened even more.

"I happened to come across it while passing by. It just happened to roll right to my feet. You... you're having quite the bad luck, aren't you?"

Bad luck.

I couldn't help but feel an indescribable uneasiness upon hearing those words. Was it just because I lost the compass that I was being told I had bad luck, or was there something more to it?

"T-thank you for picking it up..."

While expressing my gratitude, as I reached out to receive the compass...

Clatter!

That sound resonated hollowly in my ears. I looked and saw that the compass had disappeared from the green-haired girl's hand, replaced by scattered fragments of metal at her feet. It was immediately clear to me that those were the remains of the compass I had tried to retrieve. What's more, I vividly saw the girl raise the compass and slam it onto the ground in front of me.

Stunned, I was rooted to the spot, while the green-haired girl casually brushed back her long hair. A sinister smile etched deeply on her face, she triumphantly declared:

"Here you go, expelled~"

Silent, I trembled as I was met with unmistakable hostility and malice.

Chapter 41

Something Scarier Than Magical Beasts

“Why... Why would you do something like this?” Mil couldn’t help but tilt her head in confusion at the green-haired girl’s actions.

Why did she deliberately break the compass? It wasn’t an accident or a slip of the hand; she intentionally smashed it against the ground. There shouldn’t be any benefit for her in doing so.

Moreover, she clearly stated that my “expulsion” was decided. What could her objective possibly be?

“A-Class first-year, Milyu Grasse. The only student selected as a special scholarship student in the entire year,” the girl called out my name with a defiant expression.

“Eh...”

As I wondered how she knew my name, she shrugged her shoulders with an exasperated look.

“There’s not a single person in our year who doesn’t know about you. Everyone’s watching you, whether it’s for better or worse.”

“For better or worse...?”

“Just being a commoner without a family crest and snatching the prestigious special scholarship seat from the elites, it’s no wonder you’re envied.”

I had already felt that way for a while. Ever since I received the title of special scholarship student, the gazes around me became more piercing. On top of that, unfounded rumors began to circulate. To be honest, my current experience at the academy was far from pleasant.

The cause was obvious—being a commoner without a family crest.

“But that’s not all. You even took on other people’s requests and earned achievements. A mere commoner accomplishing tasks that nobles couldn’t handle must have been satisfying for you. Deep down, you must have looked down on us who couldn’t achieve those requests,” the green-haired girl continued.

“Taken... their requests?”

“Isn’t it true that you completed tasks that we couldn’t and earned the credits for them? Just a commoner looking down on us in your heart because we couldn’t achieve those requests.”

As she mentioned the rumors, I began to understand. Apparently, this girl had complete knowledge about me—about how I had been taking care of pending requests and about being a commoner without a family crest. Was that why she appeared here and shattered my compass?

Her hostile gaze seemed to confirm that it was true.

In other words, this girl...

(From the beginning, she was targeting me...?)

In hindsight, the situation was odd.

It was already close to thirty minutes since the practical exam began, and it was clearly unnatural for other students to be near the starting point. If she hadn’t been targeting me from the beginning, it would be impossible for her to create this scene.

So, what was her reason for approaching me? Based on her words, it seemed likely that she held a grudge for taking away the requests from others. Perhaps she even intended to disrupt this practical exam.

The fragments of the compass scattered at her feet served as evidence of her attempt to hinder me.

“Why...” Mil couldn’t help but voice her question, reaching a conclusion and then facing a new mystery.

“Why did you know where I was? In such a vast forest, shrouded in darkness...”

Understanding that she was trying to sabotage my practical exam, new inconsistencies emerged.

Even if she had been targeting me from the beginning, it should have been nearly impossible to pinpoint an individual’s location precisely within the Forest. Even if she used spatial awareness magic to gain detailed knowledge of the surroundings, the range of coverage would be significantly limited. No magician could cover the entire width of the forest with such magic.

In conclusion, it should have been impossible for her to intentionally locate me and disrupt the exam.

As Mil pondered this, the green-haired girl pulled out a piece of paper from her pocket.

“Just for you, I’ll tell you something, you idiot,” she sneered.

It was the lottery ticket that had been distributed to all participants just before the start of the practical exam, determining their starting positions. The number written on it was “265.”

It was only five numbers away from the “260” that I had drawn.

“I happened to be near your starting position from the beginning. Following you would be easy,” she explained.

Indeed, if that were the case, it wouldn't be difficult to tail me from the beginning of the exam. But that raised another question.

Was the number on the lottery ticket intentionally manipulated?

If she had planned to disrupt my exam from the start, it would make sense for her to prefer a starting position close to mine. However, the starting position was determined by the lottery drawing.

It seemed unlikely that the lottery was intentionally manipulated without any kind of preparation or setup. But then, the truth turned out to be surprisingly straightforward.

"It was just a coincidence," she said with a smirk. "I happened to draw a ticket near yours. There were no tricks or schemes involved."

Is it permissible for someone who is intentionally trying to sabotage my exam to coincidentally draw a convenient lottery ticket? Can such a stroke of luck be allowed?

In an instant, the phrase "unfortunate disposition" flashed through Mil's mind. She keenly felt that she was truly an unlucky person.

"That's what I meant by 'you're unlucky.' Well, in the end, there was a high possibility that your exam would be disrupted," the green-haired girl said with an arrogant tone.

"What... do you mean?" Mil asked, unable to comprehend the situation.

"About thirty people. Do you understand what that number signifies?"

Still frozen, Mil listened as the green-haired girl continued to speak with a defiant attitude.

"It represents the number of students who hold a grudge against you for stealing their requests. It means that there were others besides me

who intended to sabotage your exam. Among them, I happened to be the closest to your starting position, so that's why I'm here to harass you."

"I didn't... have any intention of stealing..."

Mil recalled what Sachi had told her. The rumors circulating within the school about her. Sachi had mentioned that someone was deliberately spreading malicious rumors, but she never thought that one of those thirty people might be responsible for...

No, perhaps the girl standing before her was the source of those rumors.

"You've gotten too cocky for a commoner, Miltiyu Grasse. Well, I'll be going now," the girl said, revealing the truth just to satisfy her superiority complex. She turned on her heel, casting a final glance at Mil with a smug smile.

"Congratulations on your expulsion."

Afterward, she melted into the darkness of the forest, completely disappearing from sight. Mil knew she should immediately give chase, but she couldn't move right away. It was the first time she had been confronted with such malice head-on, and she was left stunned.

Eventually, Mil snapped back to her senses and rushed to the spot where the girl had been standing. The shattered compass lay there, and Mil trembled as she picked up its fragments. The compass was crushed beyond recognition, making it impossible to determine the directions.

If she didn't have it, she wouldn't be able to know the location of the target point.

(If things continue like this, I'll be expelled!)

Mil found herself unable to reach her destination as planned, falling

into the trap set by the girl's scheme. She was on the verge of being expelled from the academy. She couldn't help but feel that she was a useless magician who couldn't accomplish anything on her own.

Wasn't it true that she couldn't overcome a single exam without Sachi's help? She was nothing more than a burden.

Being chosen as a special student, and even being able to enroll in this academy in the first place, was all thanks to Sachi.

Mil believed that she was a complete failure and deserved to be expelled.

But then, a familiar voice echoed in her mind, interrupting her negative thoughts.

"Among the students, you're the best in this year, Mil."

In that moment, Mil gasped and held her breath. It was Sachi's voice, the voice that she was so accustomed to. Even though she was such a mess, there was someone who still recognized her.

She wanted to advance through the grades with Sachi. She wanted to reach graduation and become a national mage.

Above all, she didn't want to be separated from Sachi. She had found her one and only precious friend.

"I won't give up!"

A spark of fighting spirit ignited in Mil's eyes, illuminating the dark forest.

Chapter 42

“Imitation”I was fine with waiting for the right moment.

I had always thought that if the chance came to hinder that special student, it would be enough for me.

However, I never expected that the opportunity to undermine the special student would come so soon, let alone in such a convenient way.

The final exams at the Magic Academy always have different contents.

Therefore, whether one can interfere with other students during the exams depends entirely on the exam’s nature.

That’s why Muska had planned to obstruct the special student not in the most recent end-of-semester exam but rather in an exam that would be favorable to their plans.

I never imagined that this time’s exam would provide such an easy opportunity to drive the special student out of school.

There couldn’t be a more convenient exam for trampling over others.

It seems that the faculty hadn’t anticipated students sabotaging each other, as there was hardly any surveillance.

Even if someone happened to witness that scene, there would be no problem if it was attributed to an accidental slip and drop.

“It’s her fault. She got carried away, despite being a commoner...”

In the world of magicians, commoners are the lowest of the low.

Yet, despite that, they stood on the same stage as the Magic Academy and even pushed aside the noble heir and claimed the title of a special student.

There is no one more infuriating than that.

I can tolerate someone standing above me to some extent, but it's unbearable when that person is a commoner.

Well, I won't have to see their face ever again.

Muska smiled inwardly, feeling the push of joy, and quickened their pace.

“Shaaa!!”

However, suddenly, a large serpent sprang out from the bushes ahead.

Using detection magic, Muska calmly captured its presence and evaded the serpent's charge with remarkable reaction speed.

Simultaneously, she used illumination magic to generate a light source and once again identified the attacking magical beast.

It was a large serpent magical beast with jet-black scales.

It appeared to be of the same species as the magical beast the special student had defeated.

From observing the battle in secret, it seemed like a magical beast that Muska could defeat without any problems.

However, it wouldn't be wise to be delayed here.

(Ignore this one too.)

Although she had been attacked by magical beasts on the way here, Muska had avoided all confrontations.

To bring the special student to the brink of despair in the final moments, she had intentionally waited for the time to pass in that place, so there was no spare time left for the exam.

The objective of the exam was to traverse the forest, so it would be best to avoid combat as much as possible.

Thinking so, as Muska tried to create distance from the large serpent, something suddenly moved from behind.

“-?!”

Feeling a trigger in their detection magic, she turned around and saw another jet-black serpent, similar to the one in front of her, looming behind.

Not only that, but she also sensed the same presence from the right and left, causing Muska to scan their surroundings.

Before she knew it, Muska found herself surrounded by over a dozen serpent magical beasts.

(Why are there so many magical beasts...!? And why couldn't I sense them with my detection magic...!?) Muska's magical power level is “190,” which is relatively high compared to the average.

Therefore, the range of her detection magic is quite wide, and she should have been able to sense all the magical beasts before being surrounded.

However, her reaction was delayed this time.

Even though she should have constantly maintained her detection magic, she couldn't sense the presence of the large serpents.

(So they have that kind of ability...!)

The principle of detection magic is to activate the magical essence and enhance one's senses to be able to perceive the magical essence of magical beasts.

Therefore, if a magical beast has the ability to manipulate magical essence to some extent and freely control its power, it should be able to bypass detection magic.

Perhaps these large serpents belong to such a special species.

Having quickly made this conjecture, Muska drew a green wand from her back and pointed it at the large serpents, staring them down.

"It's troublesome, but I'll deal with you!"

Escaping unscathed from this encirclement of magical beasts is almost impossible.

If she doesn't defeat at least a few of them to create an opening, there will be no way forward.

"[Depressing Sandstorm——Fierce Wind from the Abyss——Disperse the Desolate Landscape]," Muska chanted.

Having finished the incantation, Muska aimed the tip of the wand at the large serpents.

"[A Gust of Blade Wind, Coud Van]!"

In an instant, the minerals embedded in the wand emitted a bright

light in response to the incantation.

Immediately afterward, the magic was activated, and a gust of wind blew fiercely around Muska.

The sharp wind attacked the three large serpents in front of her with a distinct sound.

It was a wind magic that attacked the opponent with sharp winds.

In addition, by using the wand as a catalyst, the power of the magic was increased.

The gem-like adornments on the tip of the wand had the effect of exciting and enhancing the properties of magical essence.

According to one theory, magical essence is attracted to light and improves one's mood when exposed to it.

This temporarily causes the size of magical essence to expand, resulting in an increase in magical power level.

Therefore, magicians use wands adorned with gemstones as catalysts to strengthen their magic in combat.

Muska, like others, used a catalyst to enhance her magic and unleashed it upon the large serpents.

But...

“Huh...?”

The large serpents towering before her didn't have a single scratch.

No, that's not the main issue here.

The wind magic that should have been able to tear even a large tree to shreds couldn't do more than slightly tear the leaves of the bushes.

(What was that wind just now? Why is the power of my magic weakening like this...?) In that moment, Muska suddenly realized what was happening.

It was the same as "that time."

During a mission to subdue a monster, her magic power suddenly plummeted during the battle, rendering her unable to defeat the creature.

As a result, she was unable to complete the mission and had the special student take care of it instead.

Realizing the abnormality of the situation, Muska also considered a possibility.

"Could it be that my magical essence is diminishing...?"

To put it simply, her magical power level might be decreasing.

Come to think of it, not only the wind magic but also the detection magic she had used before seemed off.

She initially thought that the large serpents possessed the ability to bypass her detection magic, but in reality, her own detection magic wasn't functioning properly, preventing her from noticing the creatures' approach.

If that were the case, everything would make sense.

However, the reason why her magical essence was diminishing remained unknown...

Muska shivered as they looked at the current situation she found herself in.

“What... should I do...”

Surrounded by over a dozen serpent magical beasts while her magical power was restricted.

No matter how hard she struggled, she couldn't imagine escaping from this situation.

The voices and scent of the serpents reached her from all directions, causing her entire body to tremble involuntarily.

“Someone... help me...!”

Muska could only watch, tears streaming down her face.

“[Frozen Land Niflheim]!”

In an instant, the surroundings were filled with cold air.

“Eh...?”

The serpents that were about to pounce on Muska were frozen in place.

Bound by the ice emanating from the ground, they were completely immobilized.

Surrounded by frozen snake statues and the cold air, Muska, breathing out white mist, caught sight of a faint light beyond the darkness.

Emerging from there was a slender female student with long blue hair—Miltieyu Grasse.

“W-Why are you here?” Muska stammered.

This special student was the one Muska had just kicked out earlier.

She had broken the provided compass, making it difficult to continue the exam. So how did she already manage to arrive here?

After leaving Miltieyu behind, Muska had been running straight toward the destination.

Despite that, she couldn't help but question how this special student had caught up to her already.

Just as she was thinking about it, Miltieyu, who had crossed the frozen serpent statues, revealed a simple explanation.

“I followed after you.”

“Huh?”

“Even if I didn't know the exact location of the target point, I thought that if I followed your path toward it, I would eventually reach the target point as well.”

It was an obvious reasoning that didn't need to be stated.

However, Muska was well aware of that, which is why she had been trying to avoid being followed and had been using the darkness to make her way to the target point.

So why was this special student able to catch up to this place?

As a precaution, Muska had even used body enhancement magic to speed up and had tried to avoid combat with the magical beasts as much as possible to get this far.

Just as they contemplated this, Muska suddenly realized something.

“Detection... magic.”

“Well, covering the entire forest is impossible, but with my magical power level, I can easily cover about half of it.”

Detection magic allowed one to activate their magical essence and sharpen their senses. It enabled them to perceive the magical essence of the surrounding magical beasts, and the range expanded based on their magical power level.

While a regular magician could expand the range to about a radius of a hundred meters, someone like Miltieyu, with an exceptional magical power level, could cover an even wider range. And a skilled magician could manipulate the range of detection magic freely. Thus, Miltieyu probably had her back turned to the forest’s entrance and concentrated and expanded her detection range forward.

With that, she might be able to cover almost half of the forest.

By using detection magic to perceive the movement of the magical beasts, she had followed their trail.

Muska could understand up to that point.

However, there was one thing she couldn’t understand.

“Why did you help me?”

Muska had spread rumors about Miltieyu throughout the academy just out of spite. And in the end, she had even tried to obstruct her exam to force her to drop out.

She should have despised Muska to the point where it was unbearable.

She could have just abandoned her like that.

And yet...

“Why did you...”

As Muska suffered from her lack of understanding, Miltieyu’s youthful face formed a warm smile that brushed away the coldness.

“Because if you were the person I idolized, you would have done the same.”

“...”

Miltieyu sent a sincere gaze, but in the depths of her eyes, it felt as if she was looking at a completely different person.

Chapter 43

Malfunction

Chasing after the green-haired female student, I witnessed her plight firsthand.

Without thinking, I intervened to help, but perhaps it wasn't an act of kindness but merely an attempt to imitate someone else.

If it were that person, they would surely do the exact same thing in this situation.

The green-haired girl who was saved had a complex expression, but she accepted the current situation without uttering a word of complaint.

Seeing that she appeared uninjured, I wanted to leave this place as quickly as possible.

Just as I was thinking that, the surrounding ice sculptures suddenly sprung into action with a loud noise.

“Shaaa!!”

“——Huh?!”

The previously frozen ice was shattered, and the fragments danced in the air.

Against this backdrop, the enraged giant serpents swung their heads around.

Although I had held back the power of my magic, I seemed to have

completely failed to freeze them solid.

All dozen or so magical beasts stripped away the ice and glared at us, and I readied my right hand, beginning an incantation.

“[The Winter’s Arrival——Transparent Ice Pillars——Pierce the Fool Suspended in Heat]——[Ruthless Ice Spear, Chandel Glace]!”

This time, I would surely take down the giant serpents. I generated enormous ice pillars around me.

However, right after that, I noticed something abnormal.

The ice pillars created by the magic were “smaller” than usual.

Moreover, their numbers were few, and I could sense that the quality of the ice seemed poor.

Sure enough, the ice spears I unleashed shattered with only a slight scratch on one of the serpents.

(My magic isn’t working properly...!)

Even the previous spell, [Frozen Land of Niflheim], didn’t display its usual power.

Normally, magical beasts like these should be easily defeated with a single blow.

Is there some kind of anomaly in the magical essence?

I don’t know the cause. It doesn’t seem to be a characteristic of this forest or the abilities of the serpent magical beasts...

In an instant, a certain conversation resurfaced in my mind.

Recently, it had been heard that many students from the Magic Academy failed to complete their extermination quests.

The reasons given were often excuses like “my magic wasn’t working properly” or “I couldn’t activate my magic.” Now, at this very moment, I was convinced that their words were not lies.

The students who had failed their quests were all disturbed by magic, just like this.

It is likely that something is affecting the magical essence within their bodies, limiting the power and effectiveness of their magic.

Considering this, it is certainly understandable why they failed their quests without their usual abilities.

(However, if it’s me...!)

I don’t know the cause.

There is currently no known way to restore the balance of magical essence.

But even if my magical power is restricted, I can still unleash sufficient magic with my own magical power, which is said to be among the top five in the history of the Magic Academy...

“[Snowfall——Pure White Flower Bed——Bloom from the Depths of Ice and Snow]——[Frosty Rose, Rosewood Noel]!”

As Mil placed her hand on the ground, ice vines burst forth as if an electric current surged through them.

In an instant, they wrapped around the bodies of the giant serpents, tightly constricting them and freezing the areas they touched.

The ice thorns persistently entangled the serpents' bodies, gradually siphoning away their life force.

Eventually, the serpents turned into ice sculptures once again, completely frozen and motionless.

“Amazing...”

The voice of the green-haired girl could be heard from behind.

I had thought that due to the poor condition of our magical essence and uncertain control of magic, she might have been caught up in it, but fortunately, it didn't seem to affect her.

With [Frosty Rose, Rosewood Noel], which boasted astonishing freezing power despite having a lower range and slower freezing speed than [Frozen Land of Niflheim], I was able to defeat them with a single strike. I was truly relieved.

(Somehow, it worked...)

Clang!

The moment of respite was short-lived as a sound rang out from nearby.

I instinctively turned to look, and one of the serpents was attempting to break free from the ice by moving its body.

It seemed I had once again failed to completely freeze them.

“Kyaaaaa!”

In a similar fashion, the other serpents wriggled their bodies,

forcefully trying to break free from the ice.

Witnessing the sight of the ice sculptures of the serpents cracking and bursting one after another, Mill couldn't help but feel a sense of unease.

(Are these magical beasts getting stronger...?)

It wasn't just their toughness. Their strength and the venom oozing from their fangs seemed more potent.

The same kind of magical beasts that we fought near the entrance of the forest could have been defeated much more easily.

While it could be attributed to the magic being in better condition, even if it were in its prime, I couldn't imagine being able to defeat the serpents before me in a single blow.

Could these magical beasts be gradually growing stronger through battle?

However, the same species of magical beasts that we had defeated before didn't possess such abilities.

Moreover, the serpents thrashing around in front of me seemed to be "struggling" as if they couldn't control their overflowing power.

Could this extraordinary power be an inherent ability of the serpents?

"[The Winter's Arrival—Transparent Ice Pillars—Pierce the Fool Suspended in Heat]—[Ruthless Ice Spear, Chandel Glace]!"

There was no time for contemplation.

Right now, we needed to escape from this predicament at all costs.

With that in mind, I unleashed the magic of ice pillars, only to have it repelled by their sturdy scales.

I no longer felt the same sense of impact as before.

(At this rate, there's no way out...!)

I had to find a way to break through.

Taking advantage of that moment of urgency, one of the serpents swung its long tail.

“Watch out!”

Caught off guard, Mil and the green-haired girl were blown backward.

With just that single strike, it felt like my consciousness was about to fade away, but I gritted my teeth and managed to endure it.

“Ugh... Guh...!”

Rolling on the ground, covered in mud, Mill resolutely stood back up.

(If it were the person I admire...!)

I will never give up in this situation!

Even if my magical essence is in poor condition and I can't use magic properly.

Even if the magical beasts have grown stronger and seem unbeatable.

I am not someone with a weak heart who would admit defeat so easily.

Mill tried to chant a spell without giving up.

But...

“[Snowfall——Pure White...]”

There was no sensation of magical power gathering in her hand.

There was no magical essence left at all.

Cornered to the point of despair, Mill was at a loss for words.

In order to devour her, one of the serpents leaped forward with great force.

“Shaaa!!”

Mill had no means of resisting, and she stared blankly at the approaching jaws of the serpent.

“[Death’s Message, Death Notice]!”

In an instant, the movement of the serpent halted.

“Huh?”

The magical beast, which had come so close, froze as if time had stopped.

Immediately after, it collapsed lifelessly to the ground, not moving at all.

It was clear that it had stopped breathing and was completely lifeless.

This unique way of death was reminiscent of something.

It was the same as the distinct instant death magic unleashed not from extraordinary magical power, but from luck...

“You did great, Mil.”

A familiar voice was heard from behind, and Mil turned around in an instant.

There stood the silver-haired girl she was familiar with, and Mil’s eyes welled up with warmth.

It wasn’t a hallucination caused by despair. She was undoubtedly there.

“Sachi...san...!”

“It’s all right now, Mil. Leave the rest to me.”

How did she end up in this place?

How could she come to our rescue at this precise moment?

The explanations for all of these reasons could simply be summed up as “because she’s Sachi Mulburry.”

Therefore, without asking anything, Mil decided to entrust this situation to Sachi.

“Shaaa!!”

Whether in anger at its fallen comrade or for some other reason, the serpents let out loud cries.

In contrast, Sachi furrowed her brows in an unusual show of anger as she glared at the serpents.

“For scaring my friend, I’ll make you regret it!”

In an instant, Sachi grabbed hold of Mil and the green-haired girl and kicked off the ground with all her might.

She dashed through the serpents at an incredible speed, and before they knew it, they had escaped from the group of serpents.

It seemed like she was already using that body-enhancing magic that relied on luck, determining success or failure.

Thanks to her, we managed to break free from the surrounded situation, but the serpents immediately bounced back like springs and leaped towards us.

“[I am the Judge——Hammer of Judgment——Impose Righteous Punishment upon the Great Sinner]”

With a swift incantation, Sachi raised her right hand and recited.

“[Hell’s Gate to the Abyss]”

A jet-black magic circle appeared directly beneath the serpents, clearly visible even in the dark forest. It emitted a sinister aura that seemed like a curse wrapped around the serpents.

In an instant, the giant magical beasts writhed in agony and collapsed to the ground.

The sight was truly breathtaking.

The massive horde of magical beasts that I had struggled so much against were now all prostrate on the ground, gasping for breath.

Chapter 44

The Extraordinary Magician

In the blink of an eye, Sachi swept away the giant serpents and turned towards me with a worried expression, without basking in the afterglow.

“Are you okay, Mil? Any injuries...?”

“I-I was just tossed around on the ground a bit, so I can still stand and walk...”

Though I desperately wanted to use healing magic, my magical energy had already depleted. Moreover, the condition of my magical energy was deteriorating, so even if I could activate it, I couldn’t expect significant healing.

As I was thinking that...

“Alright, just wait a moment.”

“Huh?”

Suddenly, Sachi raised her right hand towards me. And with a reminiscent tone, she began an incantation solemnly.

“【A face soaked in tears——A watching angel——Grant mercy to this person】——【Caprice Choule of the Angel’s Whim】”

As Sachi’s hand shimmered with a faint white light, it gently illuminated my injured body. While enveloped in the warm light, I waited for a few seconds, and instantly, all the pain that remained in my body vanished as if it were a lie.

When the same magic was cast on the green-haired girl, her wounds also disappeared just as perfectly.

Normal healing magic wouldn't work like this. Even if we exclude the fact that the space was disrupting the flow of magical energy, I had never heard of magic that could heal wounds so perfectly and quickly.

The green-haired girl seemed equally astonished, and as if realizing my question, Sachi spoke up.

"That was a healing magic that might heal injuries with a probability of one in a hundred thousand. The success rate is extremely low, but if it succeeds, it can perfectly heal the injury."

"Perfectly...?"

"Yeah. Unless you're already dead or it's something other than an illness, I think it can heal anything."

I couldn't help but be amazed once again by Sachi, who casually said such things. Not only was the existence of such magic astonishing, but I also felt a sense of exasperation towards Sachi, who effortlessly wielded it.

A perfect healing magic with a success rate of one in a hundred thousand.

With Sachi's luck value of 999, she would succeed every time without fail.

Suddenly, Mil had another question and asked Sachi.

"Sachi-san, is your magic functioning properly?"

"Magic's function? Um, it's not really..."

Indeed, Sachi's demeanor hadn't changed at all, and she easily defeated the giant serpents.

There seemed to be no sign of her magic being affected, unlike us.

Could it be that Sachi was the only one unaffected by this abnormality?

Just as I was pondering, I realized something.

If the power of magic was weakening, it meant that the magical energy was diminishing. However, Sachi's probability magic didn't rely on the size of her magical energy—her magical power value—to determine its power. Instead, it fluctuated based on the brilliance of her magical energy—her luck value.

Even if Sachi's magical energy had diminished like ours, the success rate and effect of her probability magic wouldn't decrease.

Sachi was a rare magician who could demonstrate her true abilities within this abnormal space.

Feeling even more reassured by that fact, I asked once again.

"Why... why are you here, Sachi-san? You should have already reached the destination point long..."

It wouldn't be strange if Sachi, with her abilities, had arrived at the destination point before anyone else. So why was she still in this place, which was almost halfway?

"I had a bad feeling, so I thought I'd at least check on how Mil was doing and used teleportation magic to come here."

"Huh?"

Her recent statement had three strange points.

First, her special ability to sense our crisis, referred to as a “bad feeling.” Needless to say, it was the result of Sachi’s astonishing luck value working its intuition. She sensed the situation of being surrounded by ferocious magical beasts in this disrupted magical energy condition through her inexplicable sensing ability.

The second strange point was her statement that she had used teleportation magic. Teleportation magic should not be usable within the barrier set up by the instructors in this forest. Moreover, Sachi, with a magical power value of 1, would never be able to use teleportation magic, which required an immense amount of magical power. This was something she herself had mentioned before.

The third strange point was, even if she could use teleportation magic, how did she accurately know our current location?

With various doubts in my mind, I looked at her with a perplexed expression, and Sachi, feeling a bit uncomfortable, answered.

“It’s not really teleportation magic, or rather... it’s something like... random teleportation magic.”

“R-Random?”

“Usually, when ordinary people use it, they end up being teleported to some incomprehensible place or the teleportation fails most of the time. So it’s not a widely known magic. But with my luck value of 999, I can teleport to the place I desire. Its name is... ‘Selfish Summons, Aryan Shifure!’”

“ ... ”

Being able to teleport to the desired location. In other words, by simply imagining the place you want to go or the person you want to meet, the magic automatically guides you there. If it can be done regardless of distance or location, it’s no longer a simple teleportation magic—it can be called a “miracle.”

“Perhaps the teachers don’t know about this magic, and they forgot to include it as a target for the barrier magic.”

“...They wouldn’t even consider that a student could master such magic.”

Now everything became clear as to why Sachi had come all the way here. With the ability to teleport to the desired location, there was no need to pinpoint our current location, and she was probably not included in the target of the barrier magic.

If she wanted to, she could have easily passed the test of conquering the unexplored area in an instant, but she refrained from doing so because teleportation magic was prohibited.

It wasn’t that she couldn’t do it, but rather that she chose not to.

To think that she would use it to come to my rescue... it was a complex mix of emotions.

Just when I had declared that I wanted to pass the test on my own, I ended up in this sorry state.

Sachi probably hesitated about whether she should come to help or not, but it was because she had a strong sense of foreboding that she flew here.

In that case, I couldn’t blame her forcefully. Instead, I should blame myself for letting the situation deteriorate to the point where I needed help.

(I’m still so weak...)

Mil looked around once again.

The ferocious magical beasts lying before their eyes.

Their own fully healed body.

Sachi standing casually.

Feelings of frustration and embarrassment welled up inside, but more than that, Mil's exasperation took precedence, and she unintentionally let out a laugh.

"You're still as reckless as ever, Sachi-san."

"Huh? What do you mean?"

"Oh, it's nothing."

She still had a long way to go, far from being a match for Sachi. That was the realization that struck her once again.

"...By the way, do you think I might be disqualified? I used teleportation magic..."

"I-I think you'll be fine..."

Since she didn't advance further but rather returned, there shouldn't be any reprimands. Moreover, what was prohibited was teleportation magic, and what Sachi used was something similar but fundamentally different, so there was no reason for disqualification.

(...I hope.)

Well, if the instructors were to harshly reprimand her, Mil had made a promise to herself to shield Sachi.

After that, guided by Sachi, Mil safely reached the destination point.

The green-haired girl also accompanied them, and an awkward

atmosphere hung between them as they walked together.

Sachi had pretended that the girl and her encountered each other by chance, but later, she planned to explain the truth properly.

At any rate, when they arrived at the west side of the Enchanted Forest just before the time limit, the teachers were bustling around.

Many other students were visible, seemingly having already completed the test and left with time to spare.

Although Mil wanted to go through the procedures for completing the test as well, no one said anything to them.

Sensing that something was off, Sachi, feeling puzzled, approached one of the teachers.

It was Mr. Hynberelle, a short-haired, reddish-brown-haired male teacher who was in charge of this practical test.

“Um, is there something wrong?”

Mr. Hynberelle turned towards them and his eyes widened slightly in surprise.

“Oh, you’re one of the students participating in the test. I apologize. I’ve been quite busy and didn’t notice you.”

He immediately took out what seemed to be a roster, checked the class, name, and time, and jotted something down.

“All right, with this, your practical test is complete. I’m glad you’re safe.”

And just like that, it ended.

It felt rather anticlimactic, or rather, it seemed like they were too busy to fully attend to the test.

Although it was difficult to approach them in such a busy situation, Mil was about to ask if something troublesome had happened during the test. But before they could, the green-haired girl, who had been silent the whole time, asked Hynberelle.

“Did something happen during the test?”

“Huh? Ah, well, yeah... there seems to be an unexpected situation occurring in the Enchanted Forest. We haven’t actually confirmed it yet, so it’s hard to say...”

“Could it be that some students are unable to use magic properly?”

Upon hearing the girl’s question, Hynberelle widened his eyes in surprise.

“Oh, you understood that quite well. It’s true that some students are experiencing exactly that, but... did it also happen to you two?”

“In the middle of the test, our magic suddenly became unusable. And the magical beasts that attacked us were more aggressive than usual, clearly enhanced by some external force.”

It seemed that she had felt the same as me.

As we conveyed what had happened in the forest, Hynberelle frowned and sighed.

“So you two have also suffered from similar effects. I apologize for our lack of preparedness.”

“Are there other students experiencing the same thing?”

“Yeah, a few other students are experiencing abnormalities in their magical energy, causing them to become unstable.

And there have been reports of a small number of magical beasts being activated, with their latent abilities enhanced.”

Hynberelle turned his gaze towards the Enchanted Forest, his head filled with worry.

“The cause is still unknown. It could be that there are unconfirmed phenomena occurring within the Enchanted Forest, or someone intentionally tampered with the test to hinder it.”

Indeed, the current situation didn't leave much room for speculation. However, we had no idea what kind of tampering could affect a mage's magical energy and make magical beasts so ferocious.

Whether it was a specific type of magic or an entirely different method remained a mystery.

Regardless, it was a situation that required prompt action, given that it was happening as a matter of fact.

“As for the students who have been struck by troubles we didn't anticipate, the teachers have been dispatched to rescue them. For those students who couldn't take the test as usual, we plan to make arrangements for a retest at a later date.”

Hynberelle said this and bowed deeply, apologizing.

“We've caused you trouble as well. Once again, I apologize for the inconvenience.”

The cause was unknown. The presence or absence of a culprit was uncertain. The purpose was unclear.

Leaving behind a slight sense of unease, Mil and the others' end-of-term test came to a close.

Chapter 45

I Want to Become Stronger

After the end of the final exams, we returned to our usual daily routine.

The truth behind the infamous incident still remained unknown.

Fortunately, there were no casualties or injuries, but the negligence of the school's supervision became a minor issue, causing a decline in trust from the surrounding people.

It seemed that the school principal had put in a great deal of effort to restore that trust, but as students, we had no knowledge of those details.

By the way, the make-up exams for those who couldn't take the regular exams were conducted in a similar format and concluded successfully.

"Are the second-year students okay?"

While having tea in the Magic Device Research Club's laboratory, I asked Pita Jia senpai.

Pita Jia senpai was tinkering with something on a small desk by the window, but when I called out to her, she raised her face adorned with glasses.

"We didn't experience anything particularly unusual here. The exam consisted of facing the instructors in simulated battles, so we didn't have to go outside or fight magical beasts."

"I see..."

Well, troubles like this are absolutely unlikely to happen during exams within the school. I don't know about the third-year students, but the topic of discussion revolves around the first-year exams only, so they were probably fine as well.

It was quite a disturbing incident, but the fact that there were no casualties was fortunate amidst the unfortunate circumstances.

“But why did something like that happen? The teachers mentioned that the incident occurred due to either ‘an unknown phenomenon’ or ‘external forces.’ Are such things just coincidences?”

Although Pita Jia senpai isn't an all-knowing sage, I threw out the question as a topic of conversation.

Pita Jia senpai returned to her tinkering and answered while her hands were moving.

“If we consider it as an unknown phenomenon, it's one of those inexplicable occurrences that magic itself hasn't been able to explain yet. As long as we live in this world, everyone has the potential to experience inexplicable phenomena.”

“Um... that's starting to get complicated.”

I'd rather not strain my brain. I was hoping for a simpler response like “That's right” or “It's dangerous,” but it seems Pita Jia senpai intends to continue this discussion.

“In the same vein, we can't completely rule out the possibility of external forces. It could be that someone intentionally caused this incident with ill intentions, intending to put the students of the Magic Academy in danger.”

“Intentionally... but is that really possible? Even though magic is convenient, I've never heard of manipulating other people's magical energy or making magical beasts stronger...”

Raising an eyebrow in skepticism and tilting my head, Pita Jia senpai suddenly grabbed something that was placed on the desk and held it up.

“With ‘this,’ I think it’s possible.”

“This? Is it a magical device, like the glowing pen you have?”

“No, no. Although this is certainly a revolutionary device, what I’m talking about is the ‘magic device’ itself.”

“A magic device...?”

Finally realizing what she meant, I nodded as Pita Jia senpai observed my reaction.

“If you use magic devices instead of magic, it might be possible to cause such inexplicable incidents. I did say that ‘most magicians can do what magic devices can do,’ but if a skilled magic device craftsman gathers materials from special magical beasts or minerals and conducts hundreds of trials, they can create magic devices that defy the common sense of magicians.”

Pita Jia senpai gently rubbed the pen she held in her hand, wearing a slightly lonely expression.

Within those possibilities, it wouldn’t be strange if a magic device were created that could manipulate others’ magical energy or temporarily make magical beasts more aggressive. And it’s not surprising that there would be individuals who would misuse them...

“...”

Certainly, Pita Jia senpai had mentioned before that there are quite a few inexplicable magic devices in the world that break even the common sense of magicians. If such a magic device were to be born by chance and unfortunately fall into the hands of someone with ill

intentions...

It would be possible to deliberately cause incidents like the one this time.

Suddenly, I recalled something.

“Oh, speaking of which, during the entrance exams, I felt something strange about the magical beasts in the forest.

There were several high-level magical beasts in the forest that shouldn't have been there, and they attacked the exam participants.”

I remembered that at the time, one of the teachers who was either an exam participant or an examiner claimed to have seen a strange light, and it was speculated that the magical beasts had grown as a result. They also mentioned having an idea of who the culprit behind it was.

Their name was...

“The Anti-Magic Society—'Mistral.'”

“Ah, I've heard that name a few times as well. Weren't they an independent group opposing the magic nation of Orchid?”

They were a group of people who harbored dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, where magical talents are highly valued and magicians rule the era. Many of them hold intense grudges against the State Magicians and are said to be working in the shadows to bring about the destruction of the magic nation itself.

That's why they seem to have a hostile attitude towards the Magic Academy, the world's largest institution for training magicians, and have caused some trouble in the past.

“If it's them, it wouldn't be surprising if they were engaged in the production of magic devices to crush magicians. With the resources and materials they possess, it wouldn't be strange for them to

accidentally create ‘magic devices that weaken magical energy’ or ‘potions that activate magical beasts.’”

As Pita Jia senpai said that again, I felt a shiver down my spine.

Those who aim to crush magicians, and ultimately bring about the destruction of the magic nation, are targeting this Magic Academy.

If my speculations are correct...

“If the entire series of events was the work of Mistral, there’s a high possibility that they will continue to approach us using similar methods. The teachers are probably already aware of this, so let’s be cautious and make sure we can protect ourselves.”

“Well, that makes sense.”

There’s nothing we can do other than be cautious in the current situation.

And precisely because there’s nothing we can do, it’s scary to think about.

If the work of Mistral or someone else puts the students in danger once again...

If the people who are important to me are unfortunate enough to be involved.

Just thinking about it fills me with fear.

While I can protect myself, I don’t know if I can perfectly protect other important people.

My abilities mostly have effects that are beneficial to myself.

So, to be able to protect them thoroughly the next time they're in danger, I want to gain strength once again.

As I silently solidified that determination, I suddenly came up with an idea.

“If senpai could create a magic device that neutralizes their magic devices, you could become a hero of the academy in no time, right?”

“A magic device that neutralizes Mistral's magic devices? Well, that does sound interesting. And if I could curry favor not only with the Magic Academy but also with the magic nation itself, there would be tremendous rewards in store for me at my future atelier...”

I couldn't help but respond with a wry smile to Pita Jia senpai's mischievous grin. She certainly has a strong business sense.

“By the way, I've been wondering, what about Mil? I feel like I haven't seen her around lately.”

“Oh, Mil? She's out on a subjugation request again today.”

It seemed that Mil, due to the ongoing subjugation requests, couldn't make an appearance in the laboratory. And for the past few days, she hadn't been coming to the research club for the same reason.

“A subjugation request? Even though there's still plenty of time until the next final exams, is she already trying to earn points? She's quite cautious.”

“Oh, no, it's not about earning points, per se... Well, it's...”

I wanted to explain, but to be honest, I didn't have a clear reason either.

However, one thing I could say for sure was that it wasn't about earning points.

Mil had already earned enough points for the next final exams through the requests assigned by the school principal.

Then why was she pushing herself with more requests? I tried asking myself, but I had no idea.

Even when I invited her to come to the laboratory together, she often declined, saying she wanted to take on requests alone.

I just couldn't understand Mil's feelings.

“...Could it be that she's avoiding me?”

I didn't want to consider that possibility, but it was something that could very well be true.

I tried reflecting on the past to see if I had done something to bother Mil, but I couldn't think of anything.

Perhaps without realizing it, I had unintentionally hurt Mil's feelings.

Just thinking about it made me increasingly anxious, and I couldn't bear it any longer. I abruptly stood up from my seat.

“Huh? What's wrong, Sachi?”

“Well, it's a bit early, but I'll take my leave now.”

I quickly washed the cup I had been drinking tea from and hastily left the laboratory.

Afterward, I decided to return to my dorm room, hoping that Mil might be back.

If she had finished her subjugation request early, there was a high

chance she would already be in her room.

I wanted to meet with Mil and resolve this uneasiness as soon as possible.

She's not really avoiding me, right?

Come to think of it, her behavior has been strange since the end of the final exams. Maybe I unintentionally did something that bothered her.

Feeling the urgency in my heart, I quickened my pace and soon found myself outside the school building.

As I exited through the entrance, I spotted a familiar blue-haired girl sitting on a bench just a few steps away.

Wait, isn't that Mil...?

"Hey, Mil!"

"Ah, Sachi-san."

As I called out to her, the girl on the bench raised her head, revealing her familiar youthful face.

It was indeed Mil.

I hadn't expected her to be this close by.

What is she doing here?

"You've already finished your request and come back?"

"Yes."

“Mil, you’re amazing. You work quickly.”

“...”

Mil’s face turned complicated, and she turned away from me.

What’s with this awkward atmosphere?

Maybe she’s in a bad mood after all. I thought that while trying to maintain my usual demeanor.

“Can I sit next to you?”

“Y-Yes, please.”

Mil slid to the side, making space for me to sit.

Cautiously taking a seat, I nervously asked the question that had been on my mind.

“Hey, I’ve been curious about something. Why have you been pushing yourself with subjugation requests lately? It’s not just about earning points for the upcoming exams, right?”

“If it’s about earning points, I have already reached the target score, so there’s no need for that.”

Yeah, that’s right.

I know that, which is why it’s mysterious.

“Then why have you been continuously taking on subjugation requests? Could it be that you’re avoiding me...?”

“Huh?”

Mil widened their eyes in surprise.

Her reaction was unexpected, but I continued with a wry smile.

“N-No, it’s just that you haven’t been coming to the research lab with me lately and haven’t taken me along on your requests, so I thought maybe you were avoiding me...”

“I-I would never do that!”

“O-Oh.”

Her composed demeanor disappeared in an instant. Mil leaned forward, strongly denying it. The sincerity in her voice put my mind at ease. I was relieved. she wasn’t avoiding me.

“I’m not avoiding you, Sachi-san. I just wanted to go on subjugation requests alone.”

“Alone...? Why again?”

“After taking the final exams this time, I realized my own weaknesses. Even though I was selected as a special scholarship student in my year, I couldn’t pass the exams satisfactorily on my own, and I couldn’t help anyone. I felt useless...”

Mil tightly clenched her fist on her knee, frustration evident on her face.

“In the end, I ended up being saved by you again. I’m just a weak person who always relies on you, Sachi-san.”

“...”

So that's why she's been pushing herself with subjugation requests alone. She wanted to prove that she could solve incidents on her own. I never expected that incident during the final exams to weigh so heavily on Mil. Overwhelmed with emotions, Mil sniffled.

"That's not true. Mil, you were able to handle the task assigned by the school principal on your own, and you were able to protect that girl with green hair, right? If it weren't for you, who knows what would have happened to her if she was left alone with the magical beasts?"

I knew my words weren't very convincing, but I continued.

"In the end, I just wrapped things up, but thanks to you, we were able to save a student. So pay more attention to the people you help."

My attempt at encouragement fell short, and Mil continued to sniffle, tears welling up in their eyes.

What should I do?

Mil has already proven multiple times that she's an amazing mage, and I don't think she should be so down over a single failure. Maybe her goal or ideal has become too lofty.

As mischievous as it may be to enjoy her tearful expression a little longer, I feel like it's time to genuinely help her regain her spirits.

Just then, I spotted a figure behind the entrance, constantly observing our interaction and looking restless. I could sense her desire to approach us with just a glance, and I mentally gave her a thumbs up for the perfect timing.

"Besides, you know, it seems like I'm not the only one who thinks that Mil is amazing."

"Huh?"

Without hesitation, I waved to the person near the entrance, beckoning her to come over. She showed a brief moment of surprise in her reaction before composing herself and confidently walking towards us. Her wavy green hair swayed as she adorned her arms and neck with flashy accessories.

“Oh, you’re...”

“Long time no see, Miltiyu Grasse.”

I didn’t know her name, but she was the girl Mil had saved during the exam.

Seeing her eagerness to speak, I intuitively felt that her words would have a positive impact on Mil’s current state, so I entrusted her with the task.

The girl with green hair straightened herself in front of Mil and lowered her head in a slight bow.

“I’m sorry for spreading those rumors. After seeing your power as a special scholarship student firsthand, I realized how amazing of a mage you really are. And I also realized that I was wrong.”

“Huh...”

“I’ve asked my friends to spread the word that those rumors were false, so you can rest assured. Also, I know it’s late, but thank you for helping me back then.”

“N-No, it’s...”

“Also, um...”

The green-haired girl reached behind her waist and pulled out a small wand that had been hanging there, tossing it to Mil. Caught off guard,

Mil hurriedly accepted the wand.

It was a magic catalyst, with a blue gem embedded at the tip—a convenient tool for casting spells.

Blushing and turning away, the green-haired girl seemed embarrassed.

“I-I’m a member of the Catalyst Research Club, and... I made that one. I noticed you didn’t have anything when you used magic...”

Well, I could understand her intentions very well. In other words, she’s a bit clumsy.

She wanted to express her gratitude for being saved but felt embarrassed to do it face-to-face, so she casually threw the wand to her.

I still didn’t know the details of what happened between the two, but this scene seemed very heartwarming to me.

“Um, that’s all then.”

With those words, the green-haired girl quickly walked away from us.

On the other hand, Mil stood frozen in surprise for a moment, staring blankly at the wand she had received.

To make sure that the gesture from the girl wasn’t wasted, I decided to speak up again.

“There’s nothing wrong with being helped by others. The worst thing is not being able to rely on anyone and trying to bear everything alone.”

“Not being able to rely on anyone...”

“And for the help you receive, you can repay it in other ways. For example, with that wand. However, Mil, there are limits to what one person can accomplish alone. It’s fine to have high ideals, but even if you can’t achieve them, I hope you won’t become pessimistic. No matter how frustrating or difficult things may be, believe in your own strength.”

“Do you ever rely on someone, Sachi-san?”

“Huh? Me? I rely on people all the time. Like when I ask Mil to wake me up in the morning or teach me things I don’t understand in class. And when there’s a dish I like for dinner, I snatch it from Mil.”

“But you’re not relying on me, you’re just using me, right?”

Well, she has a point.

In any case, I rely on others so much that Mil is much more admirable for trying to do everything alone.

“I repay the help I receive from Mil little by little, like I did during the exam. So Mil, instead of trying to do everything alone, why don’t you rely on someone and repay that help in another way?”

“Another way...”

Mil stared at the glowing wand in her hand, and finally, a soft smile appeared on her face after a long time.

“I see... Hearing that I can repay the help I’ve received in some other way has made me feel a little lighter. Thank you, Sachi-san.”

I’m glad she seems to have let go of her worries.

“I’ll become even stronger and show you that I can be an amazing mage who won’t lose to anyone. And then, I want to become a mage who can help you, just like you’ve helped me.”

“Oh, that sounds exciting.”

As a mage, I have asked for Mil's help several times, but I guess Mil's imagination involves swooping in to save me when I'm about to be attacked by magical beasts or something.

Well, I'm not that easily defeated, but if the time comes when Mil can advance through that, it might be a step forward for her.

Thinking that the matter is settled for now, Mil suddenly tugged at my sleeve.

“Um, by the way... Can I rely on you right away, Sachi-san?”

“Hmm, what is it? Don't hesitate, if there's anything I can do, I'll do it.”

“C-Can you come with me to the research lab?”

“Huh? Right now?”

With that, I accompanied Mil to the research lab as she requested, and naturally, Pita Jia senpai looked surprised.

“Oh, Sachi-san? Weren't you supposed to go home already?”

“Oh, well, it seems like this child wanted me to accompany her.”

As I said that, I slightly pushed Mil, who was hiding behind my back, forward.

I heard in detail what the request was on our way here, but it's still a bit embarrassing, you know.

“Oh, it’s Mil-kun! Feels like it’s been a while. It’s good to see you. By the way, why are you two ‘holding hands’? It’s nice to get along, but...”

(Note: “holding hands” here could be interpreted metaphorically, as in being close or relying on each other) Well, there’s a reason for that, you see.

In fact, I came back to the research lab with Mil just for this reason.

It might sound like an excuse, so I didn’t respond with anything smart.

Instead, Mil started the conversation.

“Um, I’m really sorry for skipping the research club without permission.”

“Huh? No, no need to apologize. As I’ve said before, we don’t have strict rules or anything, so it’s fine as long as you come when you want.”

“Th-Thank you...”

Mil let out a sigh of relief.

On the other hand, Pita Jia senpai seemed somewhat relieved as well, with a gentle smile on her face.

“More importantly, I’m glad you finally looked me in the eyes. I’ve been a bit worried that I couldn’t get closer to my kouhai (junior), and I started to think maybe you didn’t like me...”

“I-I don’t dislike you. It’s just that there are some complicated circumstances.”

Mil finally revealed what happened.

“I have a luck value of 0. Because of that, I always end up in unfortunate situations, and I drag people around me into that misfortune too.”

“So, you didn’t talk to me much because you thought being close to you would bring misfortune to me?”

“Being close to someone would bring misfortune to that person.”

Mil raised her hand, showing it to senpai, the hand that was holding mine.

“But if I’m with Sachi-san, who has a luck value of 999, I thought everything would be okay.”

“Oh, Sachun’s luck value is that high? I see, that’s why you’re holding hands.”

Yes.

Maybe by doing this, we can suppress Mil’s misfortune.

There’s no certainty yet, but my intuition says it will probably work.

In any case, I got senpai’s permission.

Now, as long as we’re holding hands, Mil can interact with senpai without worry.

It’s not clear if this will truly be effective, but I’m grateful for senpai’s experimental spirit.

“Hehe, can’t leave it at that. Now that Mil-kun is taking a new step, I’ll also start working on a new magical tool.”

“W-What kind of magical tool are you planning to make?”

“Summer is approaching in full swing. Last year, we almost dried up in this lab, so I want to develop a magical tool that can adjust the room temperature from now on.”

That would certainly be a useful magical tool.

If we can freely adjust the room temperature, we can be comfortable not only in summer but also in winter.

If we succeed in creating something practical, it could be showcased as a revolutionary invention at a major research presentation.

Honestly, I can't imagine that a high school student can create something like that in a storage room-like lab, but who knows?

“Well then, I'll go collect materials that resemble that idea! It may leave the lab empty for a while, but feel free to do whatever you want. Of course, you can come back anytime.”

With those words, Pita Jia senpai-senpai swiftly left the research lab.

Just like last time, silence filled the room with only Mil and me.

She always comes up with ideas and rushes out like that.

She may look like a researcher, but she's somewhat unplanned.

However, I admire her enthusiasm.

Inspired by senpai's spirit, not that I'm trying to imitate her, but I also came up with something.

“I've found something I want to do in this research club.”

“Now?”

“Y-Yes, right at this moment.”

Just like senpai trying to make an amazing magical tool to prove herself to those who belittle her family, and just like Mil trying to repair her father’s broken pendant with her own hands, I also found something I want to do in this research club.

“I will create a super lucky charm magical tool, like those mysterious prayer beads or crystals that Mil wears or decorates the room with. As the lucky girl I am, I will make a powerful version of such lucky charms as a magical tool to bring fortune to Mil!”

“A-A lucky charm magical tool?”

“Yeah, just like that. It’ll be better than those unidentifiable prayer beads or crystals. Instead, it will be a proper magical tool that can bring good luck. And you won’t have to buy those mysterious items anymore. And.....If I can make it, even when I’m not around, you can get along well with others, right? The end of the first semester is coming, and summer vacation will be here soon. We have plenty of time.”

And I’m also interested in magical tool creation.

Although creating a super high-tech magical tool like Mulburry-san might be difficult.

While I’m still attending this school, if I can create a magical tool that can help my friends, maybe just one, I might be able to do it.

“So that Mil can make friends with more people, Lucky Girl Sachi-san will bring good fortune through this magical tool!”

“Sachi-san, you really seem like you’re going to create an incredible magical tool.”

Well, I feel the same way.

It further fuels my motivation for the research club.

As we did before, we burst into laughter, finding it funny.

At that moment, warm sunlight mixed with the scent of grass entered through the window.

It was the time when the evening glow approached, but the sun hadn't set yet.

Our summer was beginning.

End of the End-of-Term Exam Arc.

Chapter 46

Special Story

It was right after the end of the final exams.

The students of the Magic Academy were relieved from the tension of the exams and each of them was enjoying their freedom.

The school, which had been busy with studying and special training for the exams, was now eerily quiet.

Especially the freshmen, who had participated in their first exams, had bright and cheerful faces as if they had been liberated from hell, fully indulging in relaxation.

“Everyone seems energetic,” I said.

I sat on a bench in the courtyard, enjoying my sandwich lunch, watching the students play and frolic with excitement.

Some were playing with balls, others were dancing mysterious dances, and a few even raised their voices and got scolded by the teachers.

They seemed to be quite exhilarated after being released from the exams.

Mil, who was sitting next to me, also watched the students’ actions and smiled with a slightly bewildered expression.

“Well, failing means immediate expulsion, so it was an incredibly tense situation. If they feel liberated now, I can understand why they would dance in the courtyard,” Mil said.

“Then why don’t you dance too?” I suggested.

“Oh, I won’t dance,” Mil replied, puffing up her cheeks.

Come to think of it, the exams were quite chaotic.

We were told it would be a simple trek through the forest, but various troubles occurred along the way, and Mil got caught up in them. There was definitely a strange atmosphere surrounding it.

Certainly, this feeling of liberation is very pleasant, so I can understand the urge to make a fuss.

I agreed with Mil’s opinion, although I didn’t intend to do such a thing.

“But well, as a celebration for passing the exams, it might be nice to give ourselves some rewards. Like going to have some high-quality sweets,” I suggested.

“Oh, that’s a great idea!” Mil enthusiastically responded to my casual proposal.

“That’s right! Since we have a day off tomorrow, why don’t we go shopping together?” I suggested.

“Shopping?” Mil asked.

“Pita Jia-senpai isn’t in the lab because she has something to do, and we don’t need to hurry with school requests after the exams. Let’s have some fun since it’s been a while,” I explained.

Above all, it had been a long time since both of us had a free day together.

While I often had free time by myself, Mil had been busy with various

things for a long time.

And although we were in the capital city, we only had a chance to do some sightseeing at the beginning.

I thought it would be a good opportunity to go out and have a blast.

Feeling excited, I raised my thumb and winked.

“Let’s go on a date, Mil-chan,” I said.

“A date? It feels a little different, though,” Mil replied.

With that, Mil and I decided to go on an outing to the capital city tomorrow.

The next day.

On the way from the Magic Academy dormitory to the commercial district of the capital city.

As we walked, we casually observed a couple-like pair of a man and a woman passing by, engrossed in a friendly conversation. I casually commented to Mil, who was walking beside me.

“You know, on a date, it usually starts with meeting up at a designated place and having a conversation like, ‘Sorry for making you wait.’ ‘No, I just arrived.’ Since we live in the same room, we don’t have that, so it feels a bit bland, doesn’t it?”

“I-I’ve never been on a d-d-date before, so I’m not really sure... Is this even considered a date?”

“I haven’t been on one either, so I don’t knowww.”

Engaging in such meaningless conversation, we reached the commercial district.

There were shops where we could go shopping and have meals.

Being the commercial district of the capital city, it was impressive in both size and liveliness.

“So, where should we start? Mil, you don’t seem to be very interested in clothes, right?”

“Well... yeah. As long as it’s wearable, anything is fine, I guess.”

“That’s so... Mil-like.”

I knew she didn’t pay much attention to her appearance, but the fact that anything wearable would do surprised me, even as a fellow girl.

“Since you’re cute, let’s take this opportunity to find clothes that suit you. I’ll help you choose.”

“S-Sachi-san!?”

I pulled Mil’s hand and dashed into a nearby clothing store.

It was a store filled with cute clothes.

There was a wide variety, and the quality seemed good considering the affordable prices.

Glancing over the clothes in the store, I ultimately picked up a bright aqua-colored dress.

“How about this...?”

“D-Do you think it suits me?”

“Yeah, you’ll definitely look cute! Let’s get this one! If you want, you can even change into it and walk around today!”

I was currently out and about in my regular attire, but Mil had become accustomed to wearing her school uniform as a habit.

Since it was a special outing, I thought it would be more enjoyable for her to wear something cute. So, I really wanted her to change into this dress.

But...

“I apologize, but that item is currently very popular and most sizes are sold out. We only have children’s sizes in stock at the moment...”

“Ah, I see.”

The nearby shop assistant quickly interjected to inform us. Then, they brought out the remaining child-sized dress and showed it to us as a sample. It was a deformed version of the adult size, designed to fit young children. While the size seemed suitable for a five or six-year-old girl...

I stared intently at Mil’s body and narrowed my eyes in thought.

“Children’s size... Could it maybe work?”

“There’s no way that would work normally!”

In the end, we decided to wait for the dress to be restocked and left the clothing store. There were many other items that seemed to suit Mil, but they were all out of stock. We didn’t want to settle for something we weren’t completely satisfied with, so we chose to wait for the next shipment.

Despite being struck by a miraculous series of unfortunate events, we regained our spirits and moved on to the next destination.

“To change our mood, let’s go eat the eagerly anticipated sweets. You should have a good idea of which shop is best, right, Mil?”

“Yes! There’s a place I’ve been wanting to try for a while. Their roll cakes are supposed to be incredibly delicious.”

I could see Mil gradually regaining her energy. Finally, we arrived at the desired sweets shop and took our seats. With great enthusiasm, Mil ordered the roll cake, as if she had forgotten her shyness around strangers.

“I apologize, but we just sold out of the roll cake a little while ago...”

“Huh...?”

“Since early this morning, we had an unusually large number of customers, resulting in an unprecedented queue...”

The roll cake had sold out to an abnormal extent, leaving us disappointed. Mil’s spirits deflated like a balloon losing its air, and she immediately remembered her shyness, lowering her head.

“We do have other items on the menu, though.”

“Ah, in that case, I’ll have the cheesecake.”

“...And I’ll have the blueberry tart.”

Though we couldn’t taste the famous roll cake from that shop, we filled our stomachs with different flavors.

And afterward...

“I’m sorry, but we just ran out of that product.”

“Sorry, girls, but the price of that accessory has gone up since yesterday.”

Coincidentally, everywhere we went, we encountered some kind of trouble. Can such things really happen?

And in the end...

“Watch out, Mil!”

“Huh?”

A carriage that was passing by suddenly lost control of its wheels and veered towards us.

Quickly, I pulled Mil’s hand and managed to avoid any harm. However, the carriage’s wheel happened to hit a puddle, splashing muddy water all over Mil’s clothes.

Splat!

...When I realized it, Mil’s uniform was covered in mud.

It became an appearance that couldn’t be shown to anyone, so I led the dazed Mil to a narrow path.

“Oh dear, you got quite a mess, huh?”

I tried to clean off the mud with a handkerchief, but it only spread the dirt around, like a drop in the bucket.

As I struggled with the cleaning, Mil looked at me with a rather sad

expression.

“I-I’m sorry. It seems like trouble keeps happening, spoiling our day.”

“Hmm? Isn’t it not your fault to apologize for?”

“But it’s definitely because of my ‘zero luck.’ These things wouldn’t normally happen. All the clothes I wanted were out of stock, the desired sweets were sold out, and in the end, I got covered in mud... It was supposed to be a special date.”

“Oh? So you finally admit it was a date?”

Seeing Mil genuinely dejected, I spoke to cheer her up.

“Well, at least it’s just the clothes that got dirty. We didn’t inconvenience anyone else, so let’s consider it a stroke of luck in the midst of misfortune.”

“Fortunate in the midst of misfortune?”

W-Wait, Mil’s unlucky nature isn’t something new, but it’s just fortunate that things didn’t turn out worse, right?”

Though we had a series of misfortunes, they were all trivial matters that didn’t really matter in the grand scheme of things.

Considering how much worse things could have been, it’s actually fortunate that it only ended up like this.

“Even if we were able to buy the clothes today, if they were in stock and we changed into them for the date, they would have gotten dirty instead. So, in a way, it’s fortunate that they were out of stock.”

“... “

“And as for the sweets, it’s disappointing that we couldn’t have the roll cake, but at least we found out that the other sweets in that shop are delicious. It’s all thanks to my luck value of 999.”

Even with the incident with the carriage, if we had been careless, both of us could have been seriously injured. So, it’s better that it didn’t turn out that way.

Proudly boasting my high luck value in my heart, I made Mil stop her sad expression and smile softly.

“You’re always so positive, Sachi-san.”

“Well, my face can only be in one direction, after all.”

“Indeed, if it weren’t for you, things could have been much worse. Thank you for being with me today.”

It seemed that Mil’s mood had returned, and she wore her usual gentle smile.

Since we couldn’t walk around in our mud-covered appearance, we decided to end the day here. Choosing paths with fewer encounters with people, we hurried back to the student dormitory. Along the way, Mil suddenly exclaimed, realizing something.

“I-If I were to start dating someone, would my luck value of 0 ruin our dates?”

“Well, that would be a serious situation.”

Based on our outing today, it wouldn’t be surprising if that were to happen. After all, with me being there, things turned out like this. If an ordinary person were to go on a date with Mil, they might not only be unable to buy what they wanted but also lose their wallet and return home with serious injuries.

Seeing Mil starting to worry about that, beads of sweat formed on her forehead. I reassured her once again.

“Alright then, if you start dating someone, make sure to report it to me first.”

“W-Why?”

“Because I’ll accompany you on every date.”

“That’s way too awkward!”

Naturally, that proposal was rejected. In that case, I might have to find someone suitable for Mil somewhere. Someone with a high luck value, a cheerful personality to lead Mil, and the courage to remain calm in minor troubles.

If such a person exists, I thought I should definitely introduce them to Mil.

Chapter 46

Starry Blossom Festival

The Starry Blossom Festival, held at the Royal Harvest Academy of Magic, the world’s top magic training institution, is one of the grand events.

In a nutshell, it is a magical sports festival where the use of magic is a prerequisite. Magic-enhanced “races,” magic-infused “tug of war,” and magic-involved “rolling balls” are among the various events where students compete against each other, determining the winner on a class basis.

As magical clashes occur, creating a fantastical scenery, it gives the impression of stars twinkling in the sky, blooming on the ground. Hence, this festival is named the “Starry Blossom Festival.”

In the Starry Blossom Festival, there is a tradition of selecting a

“representative” for each class. The festival spans three days, and typically, students can only participate in one event per day. However, the chosen representative can compete in multiple events.

Therefore, it is customary for the representatives to be among the “top performers” within their classes, and the representative of Class 2-C is no exception.

“It’s unusual. Maiss-kun being cooperative with this kind of event,” someone remarked.

“...,” Maiss remained silent.

Maiss Glacier, the representative of Class 2-C, is not only exceptional within the class but also possesses outstanding magical power and aptitude, ranking among the top in the entire year. Additionally, with his excellent appearance and charisma, he garners overwhelming support from female classmates, earning him the title of Class 2-C representative.

Since the results of the Starry Blossom Festival also reflect on the academic performance, many students are determined to win the festival. While there are other events that contribute to grades, Maiss has never shown interest in such activities before. However, this time, Maiss unusually accepted the role of the representative. Consequently, he is currently being interviewed by the rarely seen Academy Public Relations team.

“Maiss-kun, you’ve always been indifferent to events. Why are you suddenly showing interest in the Starry Blossom Festival? Is there a special reason?” someone asked.

“...It’s not that big of a deal,” Maiss replied indifferently.

With his usual attitude, Maiss gave a cold response to the female member of the Public Relations team. However, that cold demeanor had become a factor that attracted numerous fans, and the female students watching from the corner of the classroom were ecstatic.

“Well, even if it’s just a whim, I think the classmates appreciate that you accepted the role of representative. With this, we can almost certainly aim for the top in our class,” someone said.

“...,” Maiss leaned his cheek on his hand and casually ignored the conversation.

Maiss accepted the role of representative not for the sake of the class. His objective lies elsewhere. The Starry Blossom Festival attracts a large audience, not only from the students within the academy but also from the capital city and surrounding towns. It is a grand event where talented individuals, recognized for their magical potential, demonstrate their abilities as magicians. Therefore, it is famous as the continent’s top spectacle, and during that time, the academy opens its doors to the public. Additionally, renowned “magicians” in the industry come to observe the budding talents.

(This is a golden opportunity to showcase the name of the Glacier family in the magic community. I must make use of it.) With renowned magicians watching, it is an excellent opportunity to demonstrate his abilities. By becoming a representative, Maiss can constantly participate in the competitions, thereby increasing his visibility. Although he had no interest in the sports festival itself, Maiss accepted the role of representative to make his presence and family name known in the industry.

“If we reach the top in the class, academic and recommendation points will be distributed to all the students. I’m sure many people have high expectations for Maiss-kun’s performance. Speaking of which, as a member of the Public Relations team, I’m already excited about writing a great article. Is it alright if I include Maiss-kun in the article?” she asked.

“...Do as you please.”

As Maiss reluctantly agreed, the female member of the Public Relations team clenched her fist and exclaimed, “Alright!”

Being treated like a spectacle didn’t sit well with him, but the articles from the Public Relations team also served as promotional material.

Even if he wasn't enthusiastic about it, it would be a waste to decline here. Yes, everything was for...

(...the sake of the Glacier family.)

Quietly harboring his determination, Maiss boosted his morale for the Starry Blossom Festival. And at that moment...

"Hm?"

Maiss's eyes caught a glimpse of one of the articles brought by the female member of the Public Relations team, placed on the desk. As he read the name written in the article, his eyes slightly widened.

Observing his reaction, the female member of the Public Relations team tilted her head while holding the article in her hand.

"Oh? Maiss-kun, does this catch your interest? The Great Comeback Drama of a Commoner First-Year Student."

"A commoner first-year?"

"There was a mock battle between first-year students recently. It seems that the son of the prestigious Sifonard family was defeated by a 'commoner' female student who joined the academy after five years. It was quite one-sided. The name of that commoner first-year student is 'Sachi Marmelard.'"

"...", Maiss narrowed his eyes silently.

Sachi Marmelard.

Maiss quietly snorted as he recalled the image of a silver-haired young girl in his mind. He had remembered something trivial.

"Do you find this article interesting? Do you happen to know either of

them?”

“No, it’s just my imagination. It’s nothing.”

That person couldn’t possibly be here. It’s probably just someone else with the same name. After all, her magical power level was merely “1.”

This is the Royal Harvest Academy of Magic, where only those recognized for their magical talent are allowed to enroll.

So, there’s no way that failure of a “sister,” Sachi Glacier, could... Sachi Glacier, who doesn’t exist.

“It was quite a topic within the academy, but Maiss-kun didn’t know about it? Well, you don’t seem interested in those kinds of discussions anyway. But maybe she’ll become someone to watch out for in the Starry Blossom Festival. If you’d like, I can gather information and materials for you starting from now.”

“No, it’s fine. Regardless of the opponent, I’ll just do what I have to do.”

“Oh, truly the Maiss Glacier!”

Amidst the renewed excitement from the corner of the classroom, Maiss paid no attention and looked out the window.

There was one month left until the Starry Blossom Festival.

In Maiss’s mind, he envisioned himself bathed in the cheers and his name resounding loudly one month later.

Meanwhile, in Class 1-A, there was another female student brimming with enthusiasm for the Starry Blossom Festival.

“I also want to become a representative for the Starry Blossom Festival!”

Sachi Marmelard, the magically lucky student with a luck score of 999.

Chapter 47

Representative

After a one-month summer vacation, it was the first day back to school.

During the morning assembly, I listened to the talk about the Starry blossom Festival and couldn't contain my excitement.

As soon as the assembly was over and we returned to the classroom, I decided to share my thoughts with Mil.

"I also want to be a representative for the Starry blossom Festival!"

Looking at me, buzzing with excitement, Mil gave me an amused smile.

"It's quite impressive how energetic you are right after the summer break, Sachi."

"But you see, the Starry blossom Festival, a major event, is just a month away. I can't stay calm about it!"

I swung both of my arms up and down to express my excitement.

On the other hand, Mil and the other classmates seemed to still carry a sense of vacation atmosphere, wearing somewhat absent-minded expressions.

Maybe they were feeling down, not so much due to summer fatigue, but because they were anticipating the return of daily classes.

I could somewhat understand that feeling.

“Well, I guess some people are exhausted from all the fun they had during the summer break. They might need some time to recover.”

“Some of them might have focused on their club activities or went back to their hometowns. Everyone spent the break in their own way. As for us, we mostly spent our time fulfilling school requests and shuttling back and forth to the research lab.”

“Yeah, it was truly a fulfilling summer break. Well, if I had to voice a desire, I would have liked to go to the beach or an island.”

Since it was a precious vacation, I had wanted to go on a trip somewhere. However, I became engrossed in my research at the Magical Device Research Club and fulfilling school requests, so I hardly went out.

I had considered visiting Mulberry-san’s place, but I thought it might be too soon to go back home after only half a year away.

“You’re such a lonely person, Sachi-chan,” Mulberry-san would say when we meet after a long time. I can easily imagine her saying that.

I’m not really a lonely person, though.

Well, I can go back to Mulberry-san’s place anytime if I use the teleportation magic, “Selfish Summoning Ariane Shiftle,”

which allows me to choose my destination. So, it doesn’t have to be right now.

I decided to return home once my student life settled down a bit.

During the summer vacation, I focused on my student life, worked hard on school requests and at the research club. We also went to the capital city to enjoy some festivals. Mil and I went there to have fun, but...

“Anyway, this isn’t the time to reminisce! We should talk about the

Starry blossom Festival!”

“But it was you who started talking about the summer vacation...”

Once again, I received Mil’s exasperated gaze.

Anyway, it seemed like we managed to get back on track, and Mil tilted her head inquisitively.

“So, you mentioned wanting to be the representative for the Starry blossom Festival. Is that correct?”

“Yes, that’s right. I want to be the representative for our class.”

“I heard that the students who become class representatives for the Starry blossom Festival can participate in the competitions multiple times throughout the day. Are you looking forward to the competitions that much, Sachi?”

It seemed like there was a strange misunderstanding, so I immediately shook my head.

“Well, it’s not that I’m particularly excited about the competitions. Well, they do seem somewhat interesting, though.”

“Then why do you want to be a representative?” Mil asked, seemingly skeptical. “Besides being able to participate in the competitions without restrictions, it doesn’t seem like there are many advantages.”

It was a natural question, of course.

One would assume that someone aspiring to be a representative for the Starry blossom Festival would have a high interest in the competitions, considering that representatives could participate multiple times. However, the reason I wanted to be a representative wasn’t because I was looking forward to the competitions.

There was another, much bigger reason.

In short...

“I want to be a representative for the Starry blossom Festival because... I want to stand out as much as possible!”

“....?”

Mil’s head tilted so much that it seemed like it would make a strange sound.

I gently placed my hand on Mil’s cheek and straightened her crooked head.

Still, she looked puzzled and asked me.

“Sachi-san, are you really that eager to stand out?”

“I’m more like someone who prefers to live their daily life in peace. I don’t want to attract negative attention or anything like that.”

“Um, isn’t what you’re saying contradictory?”

Indeed, the way I answered just now might sound contradictory.

It’s absurd to say that I want to stand out a lot even though I don’t want to attract attention.

“No, no! I mean, I already stand out to a certain extent within the academy. Are you saying you still want more attention from those around you?” Mil asked.

“No, that’s not it! Not within the academy, but in the ‘world of magicians’ is where I want to stand out!”

“....??”

Mil furrowed her eyebrows even more and had numerous question marks floating above her head.

To make it easier for her to understand, I cleared my throat and revealed the reason.

“...There’s someone I want to save. That’s why I joined the magical academy and aim to become a national magician.”

“Oh, now that you mention it, you said something like that on the day of the entrance exam. That becoming a national magician is the best way to save someone important to you.”

It was good to know that she remembered. With that in mind, I continued explaining.

“If I become a national magician, I can make a name for myself in the world of magicians. Furthermore, if I become famous as the ‘world’s strongest’ national magician, I thought everyone would listen to my voice. I believed that it would be the fastest way to save the person dear to me. But...”

“But?”

“If I become a representative for the Starry blossom Festival, I might be able to stand out in the world of magicians at an earlier stage. After all, the Starry blossom Festival attracts a lot of people, including famous magicians, right?”

According to what I heard during the morning assembly, the academy opens its doors to the public during the Starry blossom Festival. Many visitors, including renowned magicians, are expected to be present.

So...

“If I can make a great performance in front of those people, I can immediately show my presence. I believe everyone would remember the name Sachi Marmelard when they leave.”

“Indeed, it seems like you could stand out in the world of magicians faster than becoming a national magician. So, you want to become a representative for the Starry blossom Festival and shine in multiple competitions?”

Mil nodded, seemingly convinced.

Upon reiterating it myself, I thought it was quite a clever plan.

If I can achieve significant accomplishments during the Starry blossom Festival, it might expedite Mulberry-san’s liberation from the Forest of Judgement.

That’s why I wanted to become a representative and make a strong showing in numerous competitions.

“What do you think? I’m pretty smart, aren’t I? I never thought my dream would come true so soon.”

“Um, I don’t want to burst your happy bubble, but how exactly do you plan on becoming a representative for the Starry blossom Festival? As far as I know, the class representatives are typically chosen through ‘recommendations’ based on everyone’s agreement.”

“Huh?”

Sweat, sweat...

My mind went blank.

“D-did they... say something like that?”

“They did mention it during the morning assembly. They asked for everyone’s opinions to decide the representatives in a way that satisfies everyone. So, it seems like the selection process is primarily based on recommendations.”

“...”

R-really?

I never imagined that representatives would be chosen through such a method.

Or rather...

“So, basically, it means the popular ones in the class get chosen?”

“Well, yes, it might end up that way. Since the goal is to win in the Starry blossom Festival, they would likely choose someone who has both popularity and ability. As for strong candidates in our class, Maron-san and Poire-san would probably be among them, right?”

W-well, if it’s those two, there’s no doubt about their popularity and ability.

Maron-san is undoubtedly the epitome of perfection in Class 1-A. She possesses beauty, a good personality, exceptional skills, and comes from a prestigious family.

Poirer-san, despite her absent-minded demeanor, secretly gathers popularity through her overflowing charm and high magical power.

To surpass these two and become the most popular person in the class? That’s almost impossible.

I’m already an ordinary commoner without a noble crest, and I stand out in a negative way within the class. It’s almost like an impossible

task for me.

“M-Mil...!”

“E-even if you show me such a teary face, there’s nothing I can do.”

My dream of becoming a representative for the Starry blossom Festival was shattered, and I couldn’t help but sob.

It was such a precious opportunity to potentially free Mulberry-san from the forest...

Then, Mil, who had been observing the situation, gave a slightly exasperated smile.

“Well, I was planning to vote for you from the beginning, so please rest assured.”

“Huh?”

“I may not know much about your abilities, but I already know your power, Sachi. So, I will vote for you.”

I was taken aback by her unexpected words.

Continuing to encourage me, Mil spoke words that warmed my heart.

“No matter what anyone says, I have no doubt that you are the most skilled person in this class... No, in this academy.”

“...”

Certainly, I lack popularity within the class.

But I have at least one friend who recognizes my abilities.

Just having that fact made me feel somewhat relieved.

“Mil, I love youuuu!”

“Hey, Sachi-san! Please calm down in the classroom... And don’t suddenly hug me! Everyone is looking at us!”

After giving Mil an embrace filled with gratitude, she fidgeted while glancing around.

Although it might be difficult to become a representative, I was already grateful to receive her vote.

Therefore, all I could do now was pray for a miracle to happen.

Please, let my luck shine!

Please make me the representative for the Starry blossom Festival!

And then, the next day arrived.

In Class 1-A, the voting for the representative of the Starry blossom Festival took place.

All thirty students were given one vote each to recommend the person they deemed suitable as the representative.

As a result, the voting outcome was as follows:

Maron Melange: 18 votes, Poire Mule: 7 votes, Milyu Glace: 4 votes, Sachi Marmelard: 1 vote.

Therefore, Maron, who gathered the majority of the class’s support, was chosen as the representative for the Starry blossom Festival.

My luck might not have been enough to gather popularity within the class.

But I felt content with the fact that I received a significant vote.

Well, even if I couldn't become the representative, I just need to make a big impression in the few competitions I participate in. I'll switch my mindset and move forward.

Chapter 48

Competition

“I have been chosen as the representative, Maron Melange. Since you all recommended me, I will do my best, so please support me. Thank you very much.”

As Maron stood at the podium and greeted the classroom, applause erupted. Sitting in the back seat, I murmured with a mixture of frustration and happiness while gazing at the scene.

“...So it’s Maron after all.”

Well, it could be said that it’s the natural outcome. The representative of the Starry blossom Festival holds the key to victory in the competition. There is no one else but Maron who possesses both the ability and the popularity required for such an important role. I had hoped that maybe by some mistake, some votes would have flowed my way, but it seems luck had nothing to do with it.

“Well, it doesn’t mean you can’t participate in the competition. Choose a sport that suits you and excel in it, and you’ll be fine.”

“That’s true.”

I felt relieved when Mil, sitting next to me, reassured me with those words. However, my gaze was drawn to the vote count on the board, and I furrowed my brow.

“By the way, Mil also received a few votes. Besides my one vote, three votes went to Mil. Probably some classmates voted for you. Maron and Poirie each said they voted for each other, right?”

“Yes, it seems so...”

Naturally, Mil and I inadvertently scanned the classroom. Who could have voted for Mil? We, still without a family crest, attracted disdainful glances from the noble students. Could it be that some people have started to recognize her abilities by observing Mil's recent achievements?

She had achieved the highest magical power value in the grade during the physical measurements, was chosen as a scholarship student for her accomplishments, and successfully passed the end-of-term exams just like everyone else. I don't know if those were the reasons or not, but perhaps the people who used to look down on her just because she was a commoner have decreased.

"People are slowly starting to acknowledge Mil, huh?"

"Ehehe..."

"Well, compared to that, I only got Mil's vote."

What is this indescribable frustration? It's only natural that the gap is widening between Mil and me since I haven't become a scholarship student or achieved any significant accomplishments, but...

Feeling a sense of restlessness, I reached out and playfully tugged at Mil's hood.

"You became popular before me... traitor!"

"P-Please stop! Don't turn my hood inside out!"

As I played with Mil's hood for the first time in a while, Maron, who was standing at the podium, continued with the proceedings.

"With that said, as the representative, I will proceed with the preparations for the Starry blossom Festival. First, let's decide on the events in which everyone will participate."

While observing the situation from beside the podium, Professor Lezan interjected to provide additional information.

“At the Starry blossom Festival, you can participate in a competition only once a day. Over the course of three days, everyone will participate in a total of three events, so please carefully choose the events that suit you best.”

It seems that on the first and second days, the competitions will be held by grade level. Then, based on the scores, participants will be divided into Group A, Group B, and Group C, and on the final day, there will be competitions within each group. Naturally, our goal is to win in Group A, which is the top group in the school.

First, we need to achieve good results within our grade level and aim to enter Group A. Finally, we aim to win in Group A, where students from other grades will also participate. Everyone seemed to share the same intention, and I could feel the intense enthusiasm around me.

“With Maron and Poirie, who have top-level magical power values, we don’t have to worry!”

“Entering Group A is practically a given.”

“We’re so lucky to be in the same class as them. Let’s decide on the events we’ll participate in so that we don’t hold them back.”

Amidst such conversations, I also looked through the list of events and pondered.

“Now, what event should I participate in?”

Choosing the right events is crucial for aiming to enter Group A. Each of us has different strengths in magic and varying physical abilities. Therefore, we must determine which events suit us best because participating in an unsuitable event would only hinder us.

With serious expressions, everyone focused on the list of events.

Eventually, someone raised their hand and expressed their preference, igniting a lively discussion in the classroom.

“I want to participate in ‘Puppet Break,’ the puppet destruction game!”

“Ah, I also want to participate in ‘Puppet Break’! And maybe ‘Wall Hammer,’ the wall breakthrough game!”

“Don’t just choose flashy ones, you guys!”

Gradually, a distinction emerged between “popular events” and “unpopular events.” It seemed that everyone was interested in the events that stood out more. The reason students became enthusiastic about the Starry blossom Festival boiled down to the opportunity to demonstrate their presence. After all, the purpose of the festival is essentially to promote the magic academy and its students, so it’s natural that many people don’t want to waste this opportunity.

Therefore, everyone wants to participate in events that look impressive and allow them to showcase their abilities. I also want to participate in a flashy event if possible, but...

“...As commoners, we’re in a tough spot.”

From time to time, I could feel my classmates’ glances flickering around me. Sensing their guardedness, I let out a sigh in secret. It seems that we won’t be allowed to choose freely.

It has been about half a year since we entered the academy, and Mil and I are still looked down upon as commoners.

Naturally, we still stand out in the class, and there was an atmosphere where we couldn’t freely choose our events. If we were to declare our participation in a popular event, we would undoubtedly face criticism.

Mil seemed to sense those gazes as well and turned towards me with a wry smile.

“W-What about you, Sachi-san?”

“Well, let me see...”

My expertise lies in probability magic. Specifically, my main weapon is the instant death magic spell called “Death Notice of the Devil.” However, since the Starry blossom Festival is just a sports festival, the opportunity for instant death magic to come into play is unlikely. There will be hardly any chance to showcase my luck stat of 999.

In that case, the options available to me are either to enhance my physical abilities to the extreme with “Grand Deal of Foolish Strength” or to hinder someone with “Fortuna’s Mischievous Fate.” Although there are various other types of probability magic, these two are the most versatile.

If I want to avoid popular events...

“I guess it would be better to go for simple races or rolling ball games. Unlike everyone else, I can’t use magic attacks, and it doesn’t seem like we’ll be able to coordinate well. I’m thinking of choosing individual events as much as possible.

How about you, Mil...?”

“For now, I’ll go with whatever is left. That way, I won’t attract any animosity.”

“That’s modest of you.”

Well, it’s typical of Mil. Suddenly, an idea crossed my mind, and I leaned closer to Mil’s ear, speaking in a low voice.

“But with your magical power, you can excel in any event, can’t you? If you have a great performance in the Starry blossom Festival and lead Class 1A to victory in Group A, you’ll become popular in no time!”

“I-I don’t think things will go that well...”

Mil responded with a dull reaction. I thought it was a good strategy.

Mil is not only a commoner but also the “greatest asset” of our class. As everyone aims for the top of the Starry blossom Festival, I believe Mil’s magical power will shine in any situation. It would be great if, when we’re on the verge of winning, Mil could overcome a dire situation with her extraordinary magical power. That would surely make our classmates reevaluate her...

“Besides, for me, if I can graduate from the academy and become a national mage, that would be enough. I don’t want to take away the spotlight from others.”

“It’s about using the research funds allocated to national mages to cover the medical expenses for your mother’s illness, right?”

Mil’s stance hasn’t changed since the entrance exam. That’s why Mil doesn’t want to get too involved in the Starry blossom Festival and interfere with others. If Mil has made that decision, it’s fine. But it feels like a waste to miss the chance to blend in with the class.

“Well then, for the events with many applicants, I would like to decide them through a classic lottery. Please write down your desired events on a piece of paper and submit them here.”

Saying that, Maron proceeded with the discussion, and soon enough, most of the events were decided. Everyone seemed satisfied, and their motivation was soaring.

By the way, I ended up participating in the following events: “Superhuman Sprint,” “Ghost Snatch,” and “Personal Territory Invasion.” Well, compared to other events, they are somewhat plain.

Mil also ended up with mostly low-key events. Nevertheless, we were determined to aim for the top of the class in our respective events.

Chapter 49

Classroom Visit

It was around the time when the summer heat was gradually fading away from the Royal Harvest Academy of Magic.

Even in the “Forest of Sinners,” occasionally, a refreshing breeze would blow.

Amidst this, the sole resident of the forest, Mulberry Marmelard, was trembling as she held a cup of tea at home.

“S-Sachi-chan hasn’t come back...”

Although the summer vacation at the magic academy had long ended, Mulberry’s beloved disciple, Sachi, hadn’t visited even once during that time.

Mulberry had been eagerly waiting every day, hoping that Sachi would return during the summer.

“I heard that the magic academy has summer vacation. So maybe when it’s around that time, she’ll come back here once,” Sachi had muttered before starting her enrollment.

However, there was no sign of her returning.

Mulberry had been at the academy nearly a decade ago, and if the timing of the summer vacation had shifted since then, it would be understandable.

But it was hard to believe that such a significant change could occur in just ten years.

If that's the case...

“Why isn't Sachi-chan coming back? C-Could it be that something happened to her...?”

Restlessly, Mulberry paced aimlessly around the house.

Eventually, she came to a halt in front of the window, and a bad premonition flashed through her mind.

“No way...!”

Mulberry murmured as she gazed at her reflection in the window glass, almost as if she were talking to herself.

“S-Sachi-chan, could it be... She's having too much fun at the academy and has completely forgotten about me!”

In Mulberry's imagination, Sachi, surrounded by a crowd of friends, would laugh and say, “I'm sorry, Mulberry-san! I got so caught up playing with my friends that I completely forgot about you!”

Mulberry knew that Sachi wasn't that heartless. After all, she was the kind of girl who went to the magic academy to become the world's strongest national magician in order to free Mulberry from the Forest of Sinners.

However, Mulberry, being a worrier, could only think of the situation in a negative light.

“At least, let's pray that nothing bad has happened to Sachi-chan,” Mulberry quietly muttered to herself, clasping her hands towards the window.

Just then, as if her prayer had been heard...

Tap, tap, tap!

The window was suddenly knocked.

“Hoo hoo.”

“Oh, it’s Hoo Hoo-san.”

Looking out the window, Mulberry saw an owl perched on the ledge.

Quickly, Mulberry opened the window and invited the owl inside.

The owl, whom Mulberry had taken to calling “Hoo Hoo” without permission, was a carrier pigeon sent by the government, which regularly delivered letters to the Forest of Sinners.

It mainly brought letters addressed to Mulberry.

When she was confined here, she had been granted permission by the government to receive letters as part of their agreement.

In return, she was supposed to report on the current situation in the forest, changes in her condition as a mage, and newly discovered incantations derived from magical essence. However, Mulberry had been neglecting most of it.

Part of it was simply because she found it troublesome, but she also felt uneasy about being manipulated by the government.

Why did she have to do so much just to receive one letter?

Moreover, she could see through the government’s intention to exploit the power of mages, so Mulberry only provided monotonous reports each time.

Naturally, she hadn’t reported anything about Sachi to the

government.

“I guess this much will do this time...”

Mulberry hastily prepared a report that resembled scribbled notes and tried to fit it into a small tube tied to Hoo Hoo’s leg.

Then...

“Hmm?”

Inside the tube, there was already another piece of paper.

“Hoo hoo.”

“Oh, there was a letter inside. I forgot to check.”

Usually, Mulberry would check the contents of the tube first, but she was too anxious about Sachi, and it slipped her mind.

She took out the paper again and checked its contents.

It seemed to be a letter addressed to Mulberry, and the sender’s name was...

“Oh, a letter from Sachi...!”

It was as if the timing was spot on, as if Sachi had accurately sensed Mulberry’s unease.

Mulberry was surprised but delighted to receive a letter from Sachi. Every time she received a letter like this, Mulberry would blossom into a smile and read its contents with tears welling up in her eyes, regardless of what it said.

The happy days spent with Sachi would flash through her mind, and she would be moved to tears, regardless of the content.

Expecting to be moved to tears once again, Mulberry checked Sachi's letter.

However, it moved her to tears in an entirely different way.

"I want to focus on my life at the academy during the summer vacation, so I'll come back some other time."

Silent, Mulberry summarised the letter, omitting some parts.

Looking at the contents again, Mulberry's eyes welled up with tears, and she slumped to the ground.

"Hoo hoo?"

Hoo Hoo tilted its head owl-like and looked down at Mulberry as she hugged her knees.

She had planned to make a special meal when Sachi came back, or go on a walk in the forest together after a long time.

Now that she understood Sachi wouldn't be coming back once again, Mulberry couldn't contain her sadness.

"Ugh... Uuu...!"

As her mentor, she knew that Sachi wouldn't be proud if she saw Mulberry in such a miserable state.

However, loneliness was a lonely feeling.

While grieving in such a manner, Mulberry suddenly remembered something.

“Oh, by the way, it’s almost time for the Starry blossom Festival...”

In that case, it wasn’t unreasonable for Sachi not to come back. If she had to focus on her studies and other activities there, she wouldn’t have time to come back here.

She must be busy with training for the competition and various preparations.

“I can’t be selfish, can I?”

After wiping away her tears, Mulberry thought of Sachi’s determined efforts and changed her mindset.

For now, she decided to patiently wait.

With that in mind, as she carefully placed Sachi’s letter on a shelf, she suddenly made eye contact with Hoo Hoo by the window.

“Hoo hoo?”

“...”

At that moment, in Mulberry’s mind, a white angel and a black devil appeared.

The white angel was persuading Mulberry, saying, “You shouldn’t do such a thing,” while the black devil was tempting her, saying, “Go for it, go for it.”

Mulberry pondered for a few seconds, debating whether this was something she could allow or not. Eventually, she made a pact with the devil, just a little bit.

“Hoo Hoo-san, can you ‘lend’ me your body for a little while?”

“Hoo?”

Mulberry pleaded, clasping her hands together.

Hoo Hoo tilted its head, observing her, but eventually gave a response upon seeing Mulberry’s serious expression.

“Hoo hoo.”

Nodding in agreement, Hoo Hoo showed a positive reaction.

Moved by its intelligence and kindness, Mulberry replied with a grateful “Thank you!”

She had always thought Hoo Hoo was a smart creature, but she never expected they could communicate to this extent.

Now that she had obtained permission, Mulberry held her right hand to herself.

“[The evening meal is finished—time for sleep—though my body is still awake]—[Dreaming Trance Change].”

For a moment, a blue light flickered around Mulberry’s body.

However, it ended there, and Mulberry herself didn’t undergo any significant changes.

Nevertheless, she nodded in understanding, and next, she brought a chair over and sat down, holding her right hand towards Hoo Hoo.

“[The haunted dwelling—wandering soul—temporary lodging is right before me]—[Soul Night’s Stay].”

This time, a proper transformation occurred.

Mulberry suddenly felt as if the thread of her consciousness had been cut, and she slumped over in the chair, exhausted.

Meanwhile, white light emanated from Hoo Hoo's body, and the atmosphere changed drastically.

In Mulberry's field of view, she saw her own slumped figure on the chair.

(It seems to have worked.)

Mulberry, from within the body of the owl, gazed at her own form.

Using the magic called "[Soul Night's Stay]," she had separated her consciousness and transferred it temporarily into the host's body.

With this, she could borrow Hoo Hoo's body and go meet Sachi.

Her own physical body would remain in the Forest of Sinners, so it wouldn't be considered an escape from the forest.

(It sounds a bit convoluted...)

At that moment, Mulberry's physical body, even though her consciousness had detached, raised its head on its own.

Its vacant eyes focused on a cup on the table, and it began to drink from it.

While possessing Hoo Hoo's body, Mulberry's original body would be defenseless.

That's why Mulberry decided to entrust her unconscious self to a

specific magic.

A magic that allowed the body to move automatically when consciousness was lost—"Dreaming Trance Change."

(This way, leaving my original body behind won't be a problem.)

To maintain a healthy state of magical essence, it would automatically take care of daily life.

When consciousness returned to the body or a certain amount of time passed, the effect would wear off. However, the duration depended on the magical power level, and with Mulberry's magical power, she could entrust it with activities for two to three months.

(Then, Hoo Hoo-san, please take me to the capital city.)

"Hoo hoo."

In general, Hoo Hoo retained control over its body, and if Hoo Hoo resisted, Mulberry's consciousness would immediately return to her original body.

While it was an extremely unstable state, Hoo Hoo didn't reject Mulberry, keeping her consciousness intact as it swiftly took flight.

And so, aiming for the city of Blossom, the capital where the government was located, Hoo Hoo flapped its wings.

A special barrier was placed around the Forest of Sinners, and when Mulberry escaped, there should have been an alarm. However, with only her consciousness departing, there was no particular response.

(Just wait for me, Sachi-chan!)

In order to witness her beloved disciple's school life and her achievements at the Starry blossom Festival, Mulberry had left the Forest of Sinners with only her consciousness.

Chapter 50

Berserker

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Shoes, huh?”

“Yeah. I want a pair of athletic shoes for the competition I’ll be participating in. It involves a lot of running around.”

On the day the events for the Starry blossom Festival were determined, I decided to go shopping with Mil.

We headed to the commercial district of Blossom, the capital city.

It was an area with numerous commercial establishments, and students from the School of Magic often frequented the shops and cafes after school.

It was undoubtedly the most bustling place in the capital, where traveling merchants would often visit, offering various rare items and treasures.

From magical catalysts to athletic shoes, they had a wide variety of goods.

There was no reason not to take advantage of this opportunity.

As we arrived at the commercial district, we were greeted by the usual crowds and commotion.

Despite that, we continued through the commercial district.

“Mil, why don’t you get something for the Starry blossom Festival too?”

Like magical catalysts.”

“You’re right, it might be a good idea to be prepared. I don’t want to inconvenience our classmates during the festival.

However, for me...”

Mil smiled as she took out a small wand adorned with a blue gemstone from her pocket.

“I received ‘this’ from Muska-san, so I don’t really need to get a new one.”

“Oh, that’s right. I forgot about that.”

The girl with wavy green hair and various flashy accessories had left a strong impression. Later, we learned her name was Muska Fermanthe. Apparently, she had clashed with Mil during the final exams. As an apology for that incident, Muska-san, who belonged to the Catalyst Research Club, gave Mil the small wand.

It seemed to be quite a high-quality item, so it was indeed unnecessary to procure a new catalyst.

“As for the athletic shoes, I guess I don’t particularly need to get new ones. The events I’ll be participating in don’t involve intense running around.”

“Alright, so this time it’s just my shopping then. Sorry for dragging you along without asking.”

“No, it’s fine. Let’s go to a cafe later and have some sweets together.”

As we chatted like that and continued through the commercial district, we enjoyed our shopping and detours.

Then, as we passed by a catalyst shop, Mil suddenly asked me.

“By the way, Sachi-san, don’t you have a catalyst?”

“Huh? Me?”

“When you use magic, you always do it barehanded, right? I used to do the same until recently, but that was only because of financial reasons...”

Now that I had income from school requests, I had some savings.

She seemed curious as to why I still didn’t have a catalyst.

“Well, I guess I don’t really need one. In simple terms, a catalyst is something that boosts your magical power and strengthens your spells, right?”

“It is said that the magical essence within our bodies reacts to the gemstones, causing an increase in magical power.

According to one theory, magical essence seems to be fond of shiny objects like gemstones, and when they are nearby, it gets excited and expands within our bodies.”

“It’s like magical essence is a girl who likes gemstones or something.”

Well, there are boys who like gemstones too.

Setting that aside, magical power is determined by the size of the magical essence.

So when the magical essence expands, the magical power increases, and the potency of the magic we use also rises.

However...

“Oh, in Sachi-san’s case...”

“That’s right. The magic I mainly use is ‘Probability Magic,’ which relies on luck instead of magical power. So I don’t need a catalyst. Even if I, with a magical power of 1, were to use a catalyst now, I wouldn’t be able to perform any significant magic. So I guess I won’t be needing a catalyst in the future either.”

“I see. I understand now.”

Well, speaking in terms of appearance, I do have a desire to try holding one since it makes me look more like a proper magician. I mean, I really admire magicians who skillfully manipulate magic by waving their catalysts.

But in my case, it would just be a superficial decoration, a fashion item. So, I guess I won’t be carrying one after all.

“Oh, but if there were a catalyst that increases luck, I might want it a little.”

“What do you plan to achieve by raising your luck even more...? Actually, if such a thing exists, I would want it myself.”

And so, the unlucky girl Mil looked up at the sky, longing for the luck-boosting catalyst I casually mentioned.

“Scream!!”

“——Huh!?”

While having such a casual conversation and walking through the commercial district, we suddenly heard a woman’s scream from somewhere.

Immediately, a large crowd of people came rushing from further down

the street, and Mil and I were swept away by the crowd.

“Hey, run away quickly!”

“Don’t push me!”

“Is everyone going in that direction?”

Amidst the chaos, we were bewildered, listening to the commotion.

“What’s happening? What’s the situation?”

“Did something happen on the other side of the street?”

Holding hands with Mil to not get separated, we somehow managed to navigate through the crowd...

And eventually, an empty street came into view.

The bustling shopping street that was lively just moments ago was now filled with partially destroyed stalls and scattered debris.

As we stared at the scene in astonishment...

“Hmm?”

We spotted “a man” in the distance.

The man was swinging a “flaming sword” while letting out a growl, randomly destroying everything in his path.

“Whoa, there’s a dangerous person over there.”

“Why would someone do something like that?”

It was evident that the man was the cause of the disturbance. The flaming sword he wielded was most likely a form of magic. Even from a distance, you could feel the faint heat radiating from it, and it was only natural that chaos would ensue when someone started swinging it around in the middle of town. Though his motives were unclear, it wouldn't be long before national sorcerers or guards involved in maintaining public order would arrive, making his capture only a matter of time.

For now, let's make sure we don't get caught up in it. Just as I was about to call out to Mil, in that instant—

An unbelievable sight came into view.

“Help... someone, please!”

“——Huh!?”

Near the rampaging man, a woman sat on the ground, clutching her injured leg. Judging from the sound of her voice, it seemed she was the one who had screamed earlier. Perhaps she had been unfortunate enough to get caught up in the chaos and was now seeking help, unable to stand.

Upon witnessing that scene, Mil and I exchanged glances in an instant.

If we stayed like this, we might end up getting caught in the man's rampage.

“We have to help.” Conveying our intentions through just our gazes, Mil and I simultaneously chanted:

“【The time of awakening has come——Inner brute strength——Become the key to overcome adversity】!”

“【Filled with clamor——The breath of the azure dragon——Bring rest and tranquility to this land】!”

With our voices overlapping, we activated our magic precisely.

“【Fool’s Strength, Gran Deal】!”

“【Frigid Land, Niflheim】!”

I enhanced my body with strengthening magic, and ice emerged from beneath Mil’s feet, running parallel to the street.

I arrived at the scene first, carefully watching the rampaging man, and immediately leaped to the injured woman who was sitting on the ground. I swiftly lifted her up, kicking off the ground to remove her from the dangerous area.

Shortly after, Mil’s ice reached the scene, immobilizing the rampaging man by freezing his legs.

During this brief interval of about three seconds, those who had been watching from a distance were left speechless by the swift turn of events. The rampaging man also seemed unable to react to our swift movements and looked down at his frozen legs in delay.

He shouldn’t be able to move anymore.

Or so I thought, but...

“Ugh, gaaaah!”

“——Huh!?”

Letting out a roar, the man stabbed his flaming sword into the ground, shattering the ice. Instantly, a burst of intense heat reached us, causing me to instinctively shield my face. To effortlessly break Mil’s

ice magic like that, his fire magic must possess significant power.

Upon closer inspection, rather than destroying the ice, it seemed like he melted it at an incredibly fast rate. If he could use fire magic of that magnitude, it would suggest he had considerable magical power. Furthermore, the color of his magical essence was red, and if his expertise lay in fire-based magic, it would make sense. However, if he possessed such a high magical power, it would be strange for him not to be known as a skilled sorcerer with some renown. There were no signs of him carrying a high-quality catalyst either, and given his original magical power, it wouldn't be surprising if he held the qualifications of a national sorcerer.

But he was someone I had never seen before.

“All of you... you dare to mock me...!”

The man continued to vent his anger on lampposts and pillars in the vicinity, slashing at them with his flaming sword.

His eyes were bloodshot, saliva dripped from the corner of his mouth, and his body occasionally twitched and convulsed.

Clearly disturbed, I couldn't help but tilt my head in confusion. The woman I had helped trembled as she provided me with information.

“T-That person suddenly started rampaging in the middle of the street... He was saying something and attacking people nearby...”

“...What a nuisance.”

The woman had also been caught up in it and had burned her leg.

Since she seemed capable of walking on her own, I let her escape and turned my gaze towards the man.

There was no sign of national sorcerers or guards arriving yet.

The man continued to rampage, slashing at anything that caught his eye.

Aside from the woman I had helped, there were still a few people who had been unable to escape and remained near the nearby shops. There was a high possibility that they would be caught up in the man's rampage if nothing was done.

“...I only came here to go shopping.”

Sighing, I approached the rampaging man.

It would be best to wait quietly for national sorcerers or guards to arrive, but...

“I'll make him regret interfering with our shopping.”

In order to prevent any further unnecessary damage, I decided to stop him.

Chapter 51

Invincible

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Mil, create a wall of ice to prevent any damage to the surroundings!”

“U-Understood!”

I raised my voice and gave instructions to Mil, who was on the other side, sandwiching the culprit.

Mil nodded and once again used her ability, “Frozen Land of Niflheim,” to create a barrier of ice in the middle of the main street.

Inside were only Mil, myself, and the man.

If he can use flame magic at that level, the barrier would be broken easily, but if we can minimize the damage, it will suffice.

Above all, we managed to divert his attention towards us.

“I-I am not weak... I’m not a failure or a reject!”

The man continued muttering something while locking eyes with me and raised his flaming sword.

Upon seeing that, I immediately placed my right hand in front of myself and chanted.

“Arrival of Peace... Heavenly Guardian... Protect the powerless people... Aegis Freed... Peace for a moment.”

Instantly, a silver light emanated from my body.

A protective magic called “Aegis Freed” that nullifies magical attacks with a probability of one in a hundred thousand for thirty minutes upon activation.

It can be said that it is the strongest magic for an anti-mage.

If I have this...

“G-Gaaaaahhh!!!”

The man screamed loudly and swung his flaming sword towards me.

Meanwhile, I stood silently without doing anything.

In an instant, the fiery longsword that was thrust towards me “disappeared” from the man’s hand, as if extinguished.

-!?

The man seemed to have lost his sanity but was visibly surprised by the phenomenon.

He quickly jumped back, wary of me.

Thanks to the effect of the previously used “Aegis Freed,” it seemed that I was able to nullify his flame magic successfully.

The heat and impact from the fiery sword were perfectly neutralized and completely erased.

With a composed smile, the man immediately moved onto his next action.

“Do not hesitate... Scorching Meteor... Burn down to the marrow of the bones... Little Sun, Little Flare!”

He readied his right hand and fired a massive fireball from it.

This attack also had considerable power.

However...

“It’s futile.”

I also readied my right hand and caught the fireball, and the moment it touched my palm, the magic vanished.

Magic attacks that cannot be nullified by the defensive magic “Aegis Freed,” probably don’t exist.

Although it is an unreliable magic that only nullifies attacks once in a hundred thousand times when used by an ordinary person, with my luck stat of 999, I can reliably nullify magic.

I have obtained absolute defensive power against magic.

In that case, the only option for the opponent is...

“Bored with tranquility... Transcendent physique... Reach out beyond the limit... Limit Break, Extraordinary Experience!”

Engaged in close-quarters combat using body enhancement magic only.

The man immediately made that decision and cast body enhancement magic on himself to close the distance.

Although it doesn’t seem like a state where rational judgment can be made, he takes actions that can be considered optimal.

“S-Sachi-san!”

Certainly, Mil seemed to be shaken by this development and readied their small wand to support us.

However, I shook my head to convey that it’s “okay.”

Everything, including the man’s approach, was already calculated.

A groundwork laid down to deliver a decisive blow with certainty and precision.

“The die is cast... Divine guidance... If you resent, resent your own destiny.”

As the man leaped towards me, I pointed my right index finger and chanted.

“Trick of Fate, Fortunah!”

In an instant, a yellow light was emitted from my fingertip.

It struck the man’s body precisely, causing him to crawl on the ground.

The probability-based restraining magic, “Trick of Fate, Fortunah,” which can immobilize the target’s movements once in ten thousand attempts.

No matter how high someone’s magical power may be, since my magic depends on probabilities, there is no means of defense.

In other words, this is an invincible and completely restraining magic.

Just like anyone else, this man too was rendered unable to move by my restraining magic.

“Sachi-san, are you injured...?”

“Yeah, I’m f-fine. And Mil...?”

“I’m also okay.”

While exchanging a brief conversation with Mil, who rushed over, I furrowed my eyebrows as I looked at the man at our feet.

He was groaning on the ground, and Mil anxiously asked.

“It looks like he might attack us again at any moment... How long will the restraint last?”

“Well, I imagined it quite strongly and activated the magic, so maybe he won’t be able to move for about thirty minutes.

I’m not yet good at adjusting the timing precisely.”

I rarely use it against humans, so honestly, my sense of time is vague.

Perhaps he’ll remain in this state for an hour rather than thirty minutes.

In any case, I’m relieved that we managed to stop the rampaging man safely.

“But seriously, what’s up with this person? Clearly, something’s not right...?”

“Moreover, he used considerably advanced magic. Could he be a renowned national mage or something?”

“Why would such a highly skilled mage be causing such a commotion in town...?”

I wonder if something unpleasant happened?

But the woman we helped earlier mentioned that this person suddenly started rampaging, and we have no idea what triggered it.

At that moment, a commotion could be heard from beyond the ice wall.

Mil heard it and dispelled the magic, revealing guards-like individuals surrounding us.

As soon as the ice wall disappeared, they hurriedly approached us and began questioning while surveying the scene.

“We heard that there was a man rampaging in the commercial district...”

“Ah, that’s probably him.”

“Can it be... Did you two manage to apprehend him alone? We heard that the culprit possesses the power of a national-level mage...”

I exchanged glances with Mil and nodded in response to the guards.

Upon hearing our confirmation, the guards widened their eyes in astonishment.

Immediately after, they bowed their heads to us.

“Thank you, we are grateful.”

“Judging from your uniforms, you are students from the magic academy. It’s really fortunate that you handled the situation without

involving civilians. We'll send you a letter of gratitude to the academy later."

"Oh, no, it's nothing..."

We could only respond with "Oh, no, it's nothing" to their straightforward praise.

After receiving a brief interrogation, we left the scene, leaving the matter to the guards.

As we walked through the now empty street, we casually exchanged words.

"It was an incident of mages rampaging. It was quite a dangerous story."

"Yes, indeed. Although we were fortunate this time and managed to resolve it without any incidents, it could have led to casualties if we had been careless."

Just a stroke of luck.

I wonder if this incident was caused by the influence of my luck stat or if it was a result of Mil's unfortunate disposition.

There's no way to know for sure, but I'm just relieved that it ended without any harm.

"But why are mages causing such havoc in town? That man didn't seem to be in a normal state either."

"He seemed to be mentally disturbed. Could that be related to the cause of his rampage?"

Both of us tilted our heads and let out puzzled murmurs.

However, we quickly stopped our train of thought, and I cheerfully spoke up.

“Well, there’s no use in pondering about it. Let’s continue our shopping. I still haven’t found the athletic shoes I wanted, and I haven’t had any sweets either. The shops around here seem to be in chaos due to the incident, but I think if we go a bit further, there are some shops operating as usual.”

“Yes, that sounds good... Shall we go and have some sweets for a change of mood?”

Mil and I decided to cleanse the bitter taste of the incident with something sweet.

Chapter 52

Impressions

/ Level 999 / By IX

The day after being involved in the runaway magician incident:

During our lunch break, Mil and I were approached by our assigned teacher, Professor Lezan.

“I heard about what happened yesterday,” she said.

“Huh?” I responded with a dumbfounded voice, tilting my head.

But I quickly realized she was referring to that incident and swiftly finished my sandwich before responding to the professor.

“By ‘yesterday,’ you mean the incident that occurred in the commercial district, right? Has it already spread to the academy?”

“I received a report from the military last night. They expressed their gratitude as the academy students managed to resolve the disturbance. I even received a letter of appreciation. And to think it was you two, it truly surprised me,” she explained.

That was fast. I thought the guards would be busy, and it would take a while before the academy was notified.

“You did well. As your assigned teacher, I’m proud of both of you.”

“Well, um, being praised so directly makes me embarrassed...” I responded, unable to hide my delight.

“Sachi, you really performed admirably. I was watching nearby, and I was truly moved,” Professor Lezan added.

Compliments rained down like arrows in a storm, causing me to involuntarily relax my cheeks.

“Oh no, it’s nothing like that,” I tried to modestly hide my joy, saying, “I’m just glad I could help.”

With that, Professor Lezan pointed towards the fourth floor of the school building on the west wing while telling us:

“There’s something I need to discuss with both of you regarding that matter. Could you come to the headmaster’s office after school?”

“The headmaster’s office?”

Come to think of it, I had heard that the headmaster’s room was located on the top floor of the west wing, also known as the Special Wing. Other than going to the research lab, I rarely had a reason to visit the west wing, let alone the upper floors, so I had never seen it.

“It seems Headmaster Ananas wants to hear the details about the incident. She also mentioned having a small favor to ask both of you.”

“A-a favor...? Well, I don’t have any plans, so...”

“I-I’m fine too.”

“I see. In that case, let’s go together to the headmaster’s office after classes end. Judging by Headmaster Ananas’s demeanor, it doesn’t seem to be an overly serious request, so there’s no need to be overly cautious,” Professor Lezan suggested before leaving.

Mil and I exchanged glances, both tilting our heads in curiosity.

“I wonder what the favor could be?”

“I-I don’t know... But this will be the second time the headmaster asks me for a favor.”

“Oh, right. I remember before the final exams, she asked you to take care of the pending academy requests. Is this favor similar to that?”

“But recently, I heard that the students are doing well, and they’re handling the academy requests smoothly,” Mil added.

So, what kind of favor could it be?

That wasn’t certain, but regardless, Mil and I decided to visit the headmaster’s office after school.

As the clock ticked, the end of the school day arrived quickly. Guided by Professor Lezan, Mil and I made our way from the East Wing to the West Wing.

The headmaster’s office was located on the fourth floor of the West Wing, where staff rooms and research labs were situated, unlike the classrooms gathered in the East Wing.

Upon our first visit, we were greeted by a conspicuously luxurious golden door, adorned with elaborate decorations.

While Mil seemed unfazed, having been here before, I couldn’t help but feel a knot in my stomach.

This was the headmaster’s room.

As I stared at the door, Professor Lezan knocked and called out from the other side.

“Headmaster Ananas, pardon the intrusion.”

“Enter.”

“.....?”

A somewhat childish voice responded, causing me to tilt my head in confusion.

Immediately after, as the door opened, I couldn't hide my surprise.

Sitting proudly on the impressive seat in the back of the headmaster's office was a blonde-haired young girl who appeared to be around five or six years old.

Her golden hair was tied up in a single bun, and she occasionally touched it as if bothered by something.

Given the tone of the voice I heard earlier, it was likely that this young girl was indeed the headmaster herself. I couldn't be mistaken about that.

As I stood there, speechless and frozen in shock, the young girl sighed in exasperation.

“...It's just like when that Milyu Glasse girl came here. The reaction is exactly the same.”

“Huh...?”

Did Mil have a similar reaction too?

Well, that would be understandable.

After all, if my memory serves me right, the headmaster was an elderly woman with wrinkles who leaned on a cane.

“The headmaster assumes an ‘appearance’ of an old woman to add

some dignity. She's disguising herself from her youthful appearance," Professor Lezan explained.

"Di-disguise...? So, does that mean this cute young girl's appearance is the headmaster's true form?"

"Who's a cute young girl?! I'm doing this disguise because I don't like being called that!" the young girl retorted angrily, stomping her feet on the chair with poor manners.

Then she crossed her arms and puffed out her tiny chest.

"Anyway, I am Ananas Clostata, the headmaster of this magical academy. It's been a while, Milyu Glasse. Let me express my gratitude for handling the pending requests."

"N-No, it's...!"

"And nice to meet you, Sachi Marmulard."

"N-Nice to meet you too..."

Still in a daze, I remained stunned and dumbfounded as the headmaster began to speak.

"The reason I called both of you here is none other than to hear about the recent magician runaway incident. And I also have a favor to ask of you."

"I-If it's about the incident, haven't you already heard various reports from the military?"

Instead of me, who was still frozen, Mil responded to the headmaster.

The headmaster, sitting back in her chair, shrugged her shoulders.

“I want to hear more about the detailed situation during the incident, as well as the background of the culprit. But what I’m really interested in is your impressions as those who actually engaged in magic. Did you feel any discomfort or anything that struck you as strange? That’s what I want to hear from both of you,” the headmaster explained.

“Well... if you’re okay with our account... However, there are some things we can’t discuss in detail since we’ve already been debriefed by the guards,” I replied, finally managing to break free from my stiffness.

“That’s fine. Just give me your impressions after fighting the culprit. That should be enough. So, how was it after experiencing the battle?” the headmaster asked.

“Um... I vividly remember the fight from the other day,” I recalled.

I didn’t know what kind of answer the headmaster was expecting, but for now, I decided to express my honest impression.

“I thought it was quite formidable. The fire magic was powerful, and honestly, it’s almost a miracle that no one suffered serious injuries. Engaging in actions that involved innocent civilians is inexcusable, but I have to admit that person’s fire magic was genuinely amazing.”

“I-I didn’t expect my own magic to be easily overpowered like that. The act of involving innocent citizens is unforgivable, but I think that person’s fire magic was undeniably impressive,” Mil added, sharing a similar response to mine.

Upon hearing our words, the headmaster, crossing her arms, nodded thoughtfully and said, “Hmm.”

In the presence of Professor Lezan, a brief silence filled the room as the headmaster seemed lost in thought. Eventually, she nodded, seemingly satisfied.

“I see. Even from the accounts of eyewitnesses, it’s rumored that the

culprit possessed skills on par with a national magician. And if you, who actually fought and stopped the rampage, say the same, then there's no doubt about the culprit's abilities. However..."

The headmaster revealed astonishing information that left us speechless.

"The culprit of that incident, Abrico Gryard, not only falls short of being a national magician but has also failed the entrance examination of our magic academy, receiving a failing evaluation as a magician."

"Eh...?"

Chapter 53

The Great Task

As a magician, a person who received a failing evaluation?

I once again recalled the magician from that time and raised a big question mark.

“Th-That criminal, the magician who failed the entrance exam? This has to be some kind of mistake, right?”

“No matter how I think about it, that person seemed to be an incredibly talented magician on par with a national magician,” Mil chimed in, unable to hide her surprise, and questioned the headmaster.

But how could that criminal not be a national magician or at least an exceptionally skilled magician? We had personally experienced the extent of their abilities during the battle.

However, the headmaster didn’t correct us and proceeded to provide more detailed information.

“It seems so. According to the witnesses’ accounts, the criminal clearly possesses power comparable to that of a national magician. The flames he used in the actual incident detected a considerably high magical power value.

However, a person named Abrico Gryard had previously taken the entrance exam for the Royal Harvest Magic Academy and was rejected.”

“...”

Seriously?

If it's recorded information, it should be reliable. Even so, with their level of skill as a magician, he should have easily passed the magic academy's entrance exam. Why did he end up being unsuccessful?

"Moreover, that person's magical power value is only '85,' whereas the average for a national magician is 150, and for an average magician, it's 100."

"85!?"

Another astonishing fact came to light, making me question my ears. How could someone capable of using such powerful fire magic have a magical power value of only 85? It seemed like a miscalculation in the measurement.

Based on my personal perception, their magic clearly exceeded a magical power value of 200. So why...

"By the way, his magical element is not 'red' but 'green,' and the investigation revealed that his proficient magic is in the wind-based magic."

"..."

I was completely lost. The information had become chaotic, and my head was starting to spin. The sensory experience from our actual battle and the information we heard were diverging too much. It felt as if we were being told about an entirely different person.

"Although it's a mysterious case, similar incidents of magician rampages are occurring in other towns as well."

"Huh?"

"Magicians who go berserk, losing their sanity and engaging in spontaneous acts of destruction. These individuals, during the

incidents, unleash magic beyond their actual abilities and cause significant damage to the towns.”

“Magic beyond their actual abilities...”

Certainly, if we compare it to those examples, it could explain why that magician was able to use magic beyond their capabilities. But in the first place, it's strange that they can exert power beyond their actual abilities.

While catalysts can enhance the power of magic to some extent, there are limits. Even with a hundred or so bundles of top-grade catalysts, they shouldn't be able to produce such drastically enhanced magic. Since multiple catalysts cannot be used simultaneously, it should be impossible to perform such an audacious technique.

As I pondered, the headmaster revealed another enigmatic fact.

“The culprits haven't regained consciousness after the incident, so we haven't been able to conduct a thorough investigation yet. I believe the details of the incident will become clear soon, but what we currently know is that the magicians involved in the incident were ‘expanding the magical essence within their bodies to the extreme’ without using catalysts.”

“Expanding the magical essence to the extreme?”

“Is it possible to do such a thing without catalysts?”

“We can't confirm it yet. However, individuals who have examined the bodies of the culprits have confirmed the expanded magical essence within them. This can explain their ability to use magic beyond their actual capabilities.”

The power of magic depends on the magical power value, which fluctuates based on the size of the magical essence. In other words, if the magical essence is expanding to its limits, it's not surprising that they could use powerful magic. But is it really possible to achieve that

without any special catalysts?

Even the headmaster seemed to be uncertain and shrugged, indicating that she didn't have further details.

"The cause is uncertain, but it is a fact that the magical essence of the culprits expanded due to some factor. We are investigating the correlation between this expansion and their rampaging behavior. And now, here's the main point."

"...?"

"I'm telling you this because no one knows when another rampaging magician might appear. So, I want the two of you to help stop these rampaging magicians."

"Help?"

Finally, we reached the main topic, but I tilted my head in confusion at the vague request from the headmaster. Seeing my reaction, she quickly provided additional information.

"You are aware that our academy will be hosting the Starry blossom Festival in one month, right?"

"Y-Yes."

"The festival will attract many visitors, including numerous magicians among the spectators. Do you understand what this means?"

"Ah..."

I immediately grasped the headmaster's intentions and felt a shiver run down my spine.

At first glance, this incident might seem unrelated to the Starry

blossom Festival, but...

“Magician rampaging incidents occur sporadically. There are no clear signs or specific conditions, and they happen in various locations. It is like a disaster that can occur simply because ‘there are magicians present.’ In other words...”

“During the Starry blossom Festival, there might be rampaging magicians causing havoc within the academy?”

Headmaster Ananas nodded slowly in response.

Indeed, according to that reasoning, the academy would be at risk during the Starry blossom Festival.

With the already significant number of aspiring national magicians within the academy, coupled with the presence of numerous visiting magicians among the spectators, the likelihood of rampaging incidents occurring would be exceedingly high.

If such ferocious magicians were to wreak havoc within the academy, it could potentially result in casualties among the students.

“That’s why it’s your turn to step in.”

“Huh?”

“Among the students, only you two have the achievement of having already stopped a rampaging magician. So, if a rampaging magician or a student causing trouble appears within the academy, would you be willing to stop them?”

“...”

To stop a rampaging magician.

Upon hearing the request, Mil and I exchanged glances, not because we didn't understand the meaning but because we could fully comprehend the reasoning behind the request.

Indeed, it made sense to entrust the task to us, considering our previous experience in stopping a rampaging magician.

However, even if a rampaging magician were to appear, the chances of us conveniently being there would be extremely low. By the time we arrived, there would likely already be victims.

As if sensing our doubts, the headmaster provided further explanation.

"I constantly maintain a special detection magic throughout the academy. Its range covers the entire campus, and if any incident occurs, I can immediately sense it. Since this detection magic will be active throughout the Starry blossom Festival as well, if I sense a rampaging magician, I plan to teleport the two of you to the scene remotely."

"I see..."

The plan was to detect the incident through the detection magic and teleport us to the location. If that were the case, we could indeed rush to the scene.

"Ideally, I would directly teleport the culprits to the prison. However, remote teleportation requires the consent of the target, and they can refuse it. It is more reliable to teleport the two of you to the rampaging magician. So, I would like you two to take on the task of stopping the rampaging magicians..."

"Are you saying we should take on such a significant task?"

"Considering there is no one else besides you two who have successfully stopped rampaging magicians, that's why I've approached you. Of course, in the event of a rampaging magician, the teachers will handle it primarily. However, the teachers will be quite busy

during the Starry blossom Festival, so I thought it would be better if you could assist during the festival.”

Then, the headmaster glanced briefly at Professor Lezan before returning her gaze to us.

“Since you aren’t representatives of the Starry blossom Festival, you have more flexibility, making you suitable for the role. Of course, it won’t be without compensation. If you accept, you will receive the corresponding academic points and recommendations. If necessary, I am willing to listen to your wishes within my capacity. What do you think? Will you accept?”

“ ... ”

Academic points and recommendations were honestly desirable.

Additionally, by doing this, we could owe a favor to the headmaster, making it quite advantageous. So, Mil and I exchanged glances and nodded in agreement with each other.

“Well, if it’s just stopping rampaging magicians...”

“If you’re okay with us, we’ll gladly help.”

“Ah, that’s it! It was the right decision to talk to the two of you!”

And so, by some twist of fate, Mil and I accepted the role of stopping rampaging magicians during the Starry blossom Festival.

Chapter 54

Special System Class

/ Level 999 / By IX

On the way back from the principal's office.

After parting ways with Professor Lezan in front of the staff room on the third floor, we headed to our classroom to retrieve our bags.

As we discussed whether to visit the Magical Tools Research Club or take on a school request, Mil and I were making our way to the classroom when...

“Enough already, Maron.”

“...?”

Descending the stairs of the West Wing, we reached the first floor when suddenly we heard the name of a familiar person.

Mil and I exchanged glances and instinctively stopped in our tracks.

The first floor of the West Wing housed several laboratories, the office used by the administrative staff, and the

“entrance area.”

Unlike the main entrance, this entrance area was where the staff and administrative personnel passed through, and many visitors also entered the building from there.

So occasionally, we would see people related to the school entering the building through this entrance area.

And the voice we just heard clearly came from there.

“...?”

Unable to resist our slight curiosity, Mil and I slowly approached the entrance area.

There, as we heard, stood Maron Melange from the same class.

“Maron-san...?”

What could she be doing at the entrance area?

While wondering about that, I noticed a mature woman with the same hair color standing next to her.

Unlike Maron, who had a gentle face, this woman had sharp eyes and chestnut-colored hair.

She appeared to be in her late twenties, judging by her looks.

Her style was on par with Maron, and her reserved dress apron seemed as if her ample bosom could spill out at any moment.

Considering their similar atmosphere, could she be Maron’s older sister?

Maron, who was facing this woman, seemed to have lost her usual gentle smile and wore a clouded expression.

Sensing a somewhat uneasy atmosphere, I instinctively hid behind the corner of the hallway as the chestnut-haired beauty spoke to Maron with a firm tone.

“I told you, didn’t I? After entering the school, you should immediately leave the regular class. As a young lady of the Melange

family, if you continue your studies alongside other ordinary students, your talent will wither away. You are a magician with superior qualities compared to other children.”

“...”

Maron silently listened to the woman’s words, wearing a gloomy expression.

I couldn’t fully understand the content of their conversation, but I could tell that Maron was unusually downcast.

And then...

“Maron, you must already be aware that you possess exceptional talent, right? If you can utilize that talent, you can further elevate the Melange family. Why do you think I enrolled you in this academy and taught you to aim for the position of a national magician? I won’t accept any claims of forgetting,” the woman continued.

“...Y-Yes, Mother.”

“O-Oh!?”

I instinctively covered my mouth with my hand.

I never imagined that the beautiful woman would be Maron’s mother.

She was frightfully young. No, maybe her actual age didn’t match her appearance.

Although I was tempted to wonder how she managed to maintain such youthful skin, my attention was drawn to the words spoken by her mother.

“Very well. By the next exam date... No, before the Starry blossom

Festival concludes, make sure you complete the transfer to the ‘Special System Class,’” her mother said assertively, returning what seemed to be an enrollment permit to the office before leaving through the entrance area.

Even after her mother had left, Maron stood frozen in place for a while.

Mil and I, peeking from the corner of the hallway, secretly realized that we had unintentionally overheard something we shouldn’t have.

Guided by a revelation, we attempted to leave the scene immediately, but it seemed to backfire—or perhaps it was fortunate—as I accidentally tripped over a bucket on the floor.

Clang!

“...!?”

Startled by the sound, Maron quickly turned her gaze towards us.

In desperation, I returned an awkward smile.

“I-I’m sorry, Maron-san. We didn’t mean to eavesdrop.”

“S-Sachi-san... And Mil-san...”

Mil promptly hid behind my back, as if trying to escape. I felt the same urge to flee.

“Well, then we’ll be going now. Let’s pretend we didn’t hear anything that happened here,” I said.

Surely, it was inconvenient for Maron as well.

Deciding to treat it as if we hadn't heard anything, we tried to leave the scene promptly when...

"W-Wait, please!"

"...?"

"S-Sachi-san and Mil-san, there's something I'd like to talk to you about. May I have a little of your time?"

"...?"

What could she want to discuss with us?

Mil and I exchanged glances, puzzled. However, considering that we inadvertently overheard their conversation, we couldn't refuse.

The conversation took place in the dormitory.

It seemed that Maron wanted to consult us about the content we unintentionally overheard earlier.

She hesitated to talk about it in front of others, so she suggested discussing it in her room in the dormitory.

Since there was no particular reason to refuse, Mil and I agreed, and unintentionally, the three of us ended up walking home together.

"Poire-san isn't with you today?"

During our walk, I asked Maron out of curiosity.

I recalled that Maron and Poire-san always went home together, so I found it strange that she wasn't there.

“I had a scheduled conversation with my mother after school, so I sent Poire-san back to the dormitory first. I wasn’t sure how long the conversation would take,” Maron explained.

“Ah, I see.”

As I understood the situation, I once again heard the word ‘mother’ from Maron’s mouth.

It seemed that the person was indeed Maron’s mother.

“Your mother seems strict.”

“Yes, she is. She has a strict and uncompromising personality.”

Maron always excelled academically and had good conduct, so I had never seen her get scolded at school... That’s why it was the first time I witnessed her being spoken to like that.

“I apologize for showing you such an unsightly side.”

“Oh, no, it’s not like that,” I reassured her.

As we continued our conversation, we soon arrived at the dormitory.

True to our discussion, Maron guided us to her room.

It was my first time entering another student’s room, so I felt slightly nervous.

Mil also appeared uneasy. Eventually, we reached Maron’s room.

“Sachi-san, Mil-san, please come in.”

As urged, we entered the room, and a surprising sight greeted our

eyes.

One of the beds, presumably Maron's, had a very luxurious and ornate design that caught my attention.

On the other hand, the other bed had a distinctly girly and fluffy appearance. It was a bright yellow, plush bed adorned with a multitude of sheep-themed stuffed animals.

One of the stuffed animals served as a makeshift pillow, with a sleeping female student wearing a nightcap cuddling it.

Even at this early hour after school, she was already fast asleep.

It was Poire Mule.

"Oh, right. Didn't you mention sharing a room with Poire-san?"

"Yes. It seems Poire-san is already sleeping."

It felt like her bedtime was too early. As expected of Poire-san, who always dozed off during classes. Despite spending less time awake, it seemed like she still didn't get enough sleep.

"Is it okay to talk here without disturbing her?"

"Yes. Once Poire-san starts sleeping in her own bed, she won't wake up until the next morning. So, it's fine to have our conversation here."

"I-I see..."

Come to think of it, she never seems to wake up during class either.

Out of curiosity, I playfully poked Poire-san's plump cheek, but she showed no signs of waking up at all.

Snuggling the sheep plushie tightly against her chest, she emitted a peaceful sleeping breath.

“She looks just like a baby.”

“S-Sachi-san, now is not the time to play with Poire-san.”

Oops, that’s right.

I got too absorbed in Poire-san’s chubby cheeks.

Regaining my focus, I turned back to Maron.

“So, what is it that you wanted to discuss?”

“I mentioned earlier that it relates to the conversation we overheard...?”

Prompted by Maron, Mil and I took a seat on her bed as she sat on Poire’s bed, and she began speaking formally.

“It’s about the conversation from earlier. How much did you hear?”

“You mean the one with your mother? Well, let me think...”

Desperately trying to recall, I twisted my head, but Mil answered in my place.

“W-We heard about ‘leaving the regular class.’ We didn’t quite understand the content of the conversation, though...”

Ah, yes, that’s it.

I couldn’t fully grasp the conversation either, so it had been bothering

me.

“That’s precisely what I wanted to discuss with Sachi-san and Mil-san. Currently, my mother is telling me to ‘leave the regular class.’”

“When you say ‘regular class,’ you mean the ‘1st Year Class A’ that we’re currently in, right?”

Maron nodded in response.

In that case, if we take it literally...

“Leaving the 1st Year Class A? That means... Is that even possible? What’s the point of it?”

I wondered what advantages there would be in leaving the current class. Could they even leave? And if they could, would they transfer to another class?

There were many things I didn’t understand, and I tilted my head in confusion. Maron lowered her eyelids sadly and answered.

“My mother believes that interaction with classmates and following the same pace in classes is entirely meaningless.”

“Huh...”

“That’s why she is considering transferring me from the regular class to the ‘Special System Class’ to allow me to focus more on academics.”

Chapter 55

Sleeping Beauty

/ Level 999 / By IX

In response to the words I heard earlier, I involuntarily echoed them.

“A special system class? What’s that?”

I tilted my head curiously, clearly unfamiliar with the term.

“Well, it’s understandable that you don’t know. It’s a ‘school system’ that regular students who lead typical student lives would rarely encounter. Currently, there are no students belonging to a special system class,” Maron explained.

“So, based on the meaning of the word, is it like a ‘slightly special class’ different from regular classes?” I asked.

“You’re not mistaken in that understanding,” Maron confirmed.

Phew, that’s a relief. It seems my limited knowledge hasn’t failed me in terms of comprehension. While silently exhaling a sigh of relief, Maron provided further explanation.

“A special system class can be described as a ‘class for students with special reasons.’ It is designed to provide special guidance and environment for students who cannot attend classes like other students or face difficulties in their daily lives,” Maron clarified.

“A special environment, huh?” It seemed to imply a class that doesn’t interact with other students.

I wondered why these students had to be separated from others, but I couldn’t figure it out. As I pondered over the mystery, Mil nodded

with apparent understanding.

“Is it used for students who have ‘Magic Element Interference Deficiency’?” Mil asked.

“Yes, you’re right, Mil-san,” Maron confirmed.

“Well, what’s ‘Magic Element Interference Deficiency’?”

Oh, am I the only one who can’t keep up with the conversation? Once again, an unfamiliar term came up, and I furrowed my brow in confusion.

However, Maron patiently explained without any hint of exasperation.

“It seems that some people have emotional magic elements, and when they come into contact with other magicians, they may cause ‘internal deficiency’.”

“Why?”

“Somehow, it interferes with the magic elements of others and intensifies the emotions within their bodies. This can lead to physical discomfort. So, those individuals need to avoid contact with other magicians as much as possible,”

Maron elaborated.

“Ah, that’s why there’s a special system class.”

Now I fully understand. Some individuals experience physical abnormalities when living in close proximity to other magicians. To maintain their well-being, they need to live separate lives from regular students, and that’s why the special system class exists.

“Not only those who have Magic Element Interference Deficiency, but

there are also various reasons why some people have to be separated into different classes,” Maron explained. “For individuals like that, the special system class is provided, and my mother has told me to transfer there.”

“But Maron-san, you’re attending classes normally, right? So why the special system class?” I asked, puzzled.

Having health issues when attending classes with other students... That had never happened before, as far as I knew. So why?

Maron suddenly lowered her gaze sadly and replied, “My mother has high expectations for me.”

“Expectations?” I echoed.

“My mother believes that I have a different talent than other students. Therefore, she thinks that attending classes at the same pace as regular students would not be beneficial for me.”

“Oh...” I murmured.

In other words, Maron’s mother implied that it would be inefficient for someone as outstanding as Maron to progress at the same speed as other students. It was a subtle form of looking down on the other students. While it was understandable for a mother to have high hopes for her daughter, it must have made Maron feel uncomfortable to be constantly compared to others.

“If I transfer to the special system class, I can pursue my studies with a different curriculum from other students. I would be able to compress a one-year course into six months...” Maron explained.

“So, they want to give you a packed curriculum tailored to your achievements and talents,” I summarized.

Indeed, if that were possible, Maron would be able to advance faster

than the other students. Conversely, if she continued as she was now, she could only expect the same level of growth as the other students. That's why...

'If you continue your studies among other regular students, your talent will wither. You are a magician with exceptional potential compared to other children,' I recalled what Maron's mother had said.

If it was Maron, she could undoubtedly keep up with more advanced course materials. Apparently, the concept of 'grade skipping' existed in this magic academy, so it was possible that based on her performance, she could skip multiple grades and reach the third year in one go. It would be an impressive achievement to become the first student to skip grades since the academy's establishment, but...

"You don't want to transfer to the special system class, Maron-san," I concluded.

"Yes," Maron replied quietly.

It seemed that Maron's mother didn't consider Maron's feelings at all.

When Maron talked with her mother, she had a very awkward expression. It was as if she had something to say but couldn't voice it, a frustrating feeling was evident.

And now, finally, I understood the reason behind Maron's troubled expression when discussing the special system class.

"I don't want to transfer to the special system class. I want to continue my school life with everyone in 1-A," Maron expressed.

I empathized with her. Even though I didn't have many friends and felt somewhat isolated in the class, I didn't want to leave either. I could talk with Mil, Maron, and Poire, and Professor Lezan was very kind. If someone like me felt that way, Maron, who had such a great bond with her classmates, would certainly not want to go to the special system class.

“In addition, my mother thinks that participating in research clubs and living in the student dormitory are unnecessary, so she asked me to withdraw from both,” Maron continued.

“Eh, the research club and dormitory too?”

“Yes. My mother told me to complete the withdrawal procedures for the research club along with the application for transfer to the special system class. As for the student dormitory, it seems my mother has already requested the teachers to prepare a private room for me.”

Silence filled the air.

Isn't this going too far? It feels like she's being too thorough, meddling in everything, not just academics.

Can't she at least allow Maron to stay in the dormitory and remain in the research club?

“Could it be that what you want to discuss with us is finding a way to maintain the current environment without making any changes?” I suggested.

“No, I believe that would be difficult. Once my mother has decided something, she never backs down. Even if it means persuading the teachers forcefully. So, what I want to consult with both of you about is...” Maron suddenly smiled gently and caressed Poire's head, who was sleeping next to her.

“It's about Poire.”

“Eh...?”

Chapter 56

The Girls' Vow

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Do you want to consult us about Poire-san’s matter?” I wondered, but I immediately understood what Maron wanted to say.

“Ah, right. Poire-san always relies on Maron, doesn’t she?”

“What do you mean?”

Only Mil, who didn’t know the situation, furrowed her eyebrows in confusion. In order to explain their relationship to her, I proudly decided to clarify.

“Poire-san is ‘helpless’ without Maron.”

“.....???”

“Um, Sachi-sama, I feel like that explanation is insufficient...”

Oh no, was it not good enough? Since my explanation was lacking, Maron took the initiative to explain it again.

“Poire-san is essentially someone who ‘can’t do anything alone,’ so I always take care of her daily needs. From preparing her clothes, guiding her to different classrooms, arranging her teaching materials, she’s a girl who can’t lead a normal school life without relying on someone’s help...”

“I see, I understand now.”

Upon hearing that, it made me think that Poire-san might indeed need

to transfer to a special education class. However, whether such a transfer would be allowed solely based on that reason alone seems questionable.

“If I were to leave Class 1-A and transfer to the special education class, there would be no one to take care of Poire-san anymore. I’m sure she would be in trouble if that happened.”

“When we went flower picking, Poire-san said she wouldn’t know where to go without Maron taking her. She could definitely become a major problem...”

It could even lead to a worst-case scenario in front of everyone. That’s why if Maron were to leave Class 1-A and go to the special education class or if her dormitory life with Poire-san were to end, there would be no one left to take care of her.

“So what you want to consult with us is that you want us to take care of Poire-san in Maron’s place?”

“Yes. If the time comes when I have to leave Poire-san’s side, I would like to entrust her to both of you. I could ask other friends as well, but you two are the only ones who know about this situation for now.”

“I see...”

It’s a slightly complicated matter, and we certainly wouldn’t want to spread it around unnecessarily. In that case, it makes sense to consult with us, who happened to overhear Maron and her mother’s conversation.

“I thought that if it were Sachi-san and Mil-san, you would treat Poire-san kindly, and I thought Poire-san would be happy too...”

“Yeah, if that’s the case, I’m more than willing to take it on. If Poire-san is in trouble, we’ll definitely help.”

“I-I also hope to be of assistance to Poire-san...!”

Mil and I nodded in agreement, returning the nod to Maron. Maron’s face blossomed with relief, as if she felt reassured knowing that someone would take care of Poire after she was gone. It’s good that the problem was resolved, but...

“But, Maron-san, deep down, you don’t really want to change your current environment, right? You don’t want to leave Class 1-A?”

“...”

Understanding Maron’s feelings, I asked again. Maron’s eyes widened slightly, and then she weakly nodded.

It’s natural for her to worry about Poire, but it seems that her desire to stay in Class 1-A is stronger. Maron always looks so happy when she’s in the class.

“Is there no way we can do something about it?”

Mil looked at me with an anxious expression. I also want to do something, but I think persuading Maron’s mother would be extremely difficult. Maron herself has said that once her mother decides something, she won’t easily change her mind.

I rubbed my temples with my fingers and groaned as I pondered. I wondered if there was a good strategy, and suddenly, a clever idea came to mind.

“Then, how about aiming to win the ‘Starry blossom Festival?’”

Both Mil and Maron went: “Eh?”

Mil and Maron looked at me with matching question marks, clearly perplexed by the sudden mention of the seemingly unrelated ‘Starry blossom Festival.’

“S-Sachi-san? Isn’t the flow of the conversation a bit strange?”

“It’s not strange. If Maron-san doesn’t want to change her current environment, then she should show her mother that she can grow as a magician even in the current setting. And I think winning the Starry blossom Festival would be the best way to do that.”

“W-What do you mean?”

Both of them tilted their heads in confusion, so I cleared my throat and proceeded to explain.

“Well, Maron-san’s mother essentially wants Maron to become an impressive magician as soon as possible, right? That’s why she’s trying to transfer her to the special education class, isn’t it? So if we can show her that Maron can become an amazing magician even in her current class, maybe her mother will reconsider.”

“B-But, how does that relate to aiming for the Starry blossom Festival?”

Maron’s perplexity is understandable, but there is a clear reason behind this.

“Because Maron-san is the ‘representative’ of the Starry blossom Festival.”

“Re-representative?”

“If Maron-san leads Class 1-A as the representative and guides them to victory in the Starry blossom Festival, it will demonstrate your growth perfectly. It might make your mother realize that there’s no need for you to transfer to the special education class.”

Showing her power as the representative is something only Maron can do. If she can lead Class 1-A to victory in the upcoming Starry blossom

Festival, where upperclassmen will also be participating, it might make her mother reconsider her current plan.

Maron nodded in agreement with the strategy.

“That possibility is certainly not zero. However, even if Maron-san wins the Starry blossom Festival and your mother still insists on you transferring, then there’s nothing we can do about it. But, if Maron-san can win the festival, you will have tangible memories of your time in Class 1-A as the representative. It might provide some solace, even if you end up leaving the class.”

I explained my strategy, and Mil nodded in agreement.

“So, your plan is to aim for both ‘preventing the transfer’ and ‘creating memories.’ It’s indeed a clever idea.”

“See? See?”

I am clever!

Perhaps my knowledge gained from attending the academy has also improved my thinking skills.

As I secretly reveled in my accomplishment, Maron-san muttered, as if contemplating.

“Creating memories with everyone...”

“There’s a chance we can change your mother’s mind, so let’s strive for victory in the Starry blossom Festival. Mil and I will give it our all too!” I emphasized to her.

“Well, Sachi-san was enthusiastic about the Starry blossom Festival from the start.”

“Well, I do have a big goal in mind. So, to be honest, I wanted to participate as the representative, but this time, I’ll let Maron-san take that role.”

“...It was already decided that Maron-san would be the representative.”

Mil calmly interjected, and I playfully launched a teasing attack.

In the midst of our playful banter, Maron’s face brightened slightly, and she showed us her usual smile.

“Yes, that’s right. I will do my best as the representative!”

And so, another goal was set: aiming for victory in the Starry blossom Festival.

Chapter 56

Opening Ceremony

/ Level 999 / By IX

And then, a month had already passed.

During this month, the students dedicated themselves to practicing for the Starry blossom Festival, and the academy was filled with energy.

Everyone was determined to make a name for themselves in the world of magicians through this opportunity.

Naturally, I also have a mission to fulfill, which is to free Mulbury-san from the Forest of sinners, and now I also want to achieve results in the Starry blossom Festival to help my classmate, Maron-san.

And today, finally, is the long-awaited day of the Royal Harvest Magic Academy's competition festival—the day of the Starry blossom Festival.

“Good morning, everyone. Today is the long-awaited day of the Starry blossom Festival.”

The opening ceremony is currently taking place in the schoolyard.

The schoolyard has been specially prepared for the Starry blossom Festival, surrounded by two-story spectator stands.

It used to be just a vast, bleak sandground, but they transformed it into a splendid arena in a short period of time using magic to make it easier to watch the competitions.

To think that they could shape a magnificent stadium in such a short

time, the power of magic is truly awe-inspiring.

“Fortunately, we have been blessed with good weather, and we have been able to prepare without any significant troubles or delays until today. I would like to express my gratitude once again to all the spectators who have gathered here despite their busy schedules.”

And on the platform set up in front of the arena, the Student Council President is currently giving the opening speech through a amplification magic.

Crossgry Travaier, the most outstanding student in the school, belonging to Class 3-D.

She is an elegant lady with short bobbed black hair, and her slightly husky voice and slender black eyes add to her coolness.

Rumors have it that Crossgry, the Student Council President, is an extraordinary talent with a magical power level of

“260,” and her greatest strength lies in her magical skills.

It is said that she is a prodigy who can use magic without chanting.

‘How can I use magic without chanting, Mulbury-san?’

“You have to clear your mind and communicate with the mana only in your heart. If you have even a little bit of distracting thoughts, you won’t be able to convey the correct incantation. So, if you’re only thinking about tonight’s dinner, it might be a bit difficult.”

Non-verbal magic.

It is an advanced technique that allows the activation of spells without uttering commands to the mana, but by reciting them in one’s mind.

Even Mulbury-san, who constantly communicates with mana as a mage, can only activate it occasionally. It is considered the most difficult technique to master.

However, it seems that the Student Council President can use it flawlessly.

Since she doesn't move her lips and only forms the incantation in her mind, the rotation rate of her magic is abnormally high.

By stacking powerful spells and shooting them rapidly, she has defeated numerous magical beasts and currently has the highest success rate in completing academy missions.

She holds the highest scores in both extermination points and academic points, and her excellence has earned her the position of Student Council President.

Also, she's attractive and has a great figure. Rumor has it that there's even a fan club for her within the academy.

“...She's a formidable opponent in many ways.”

If I aim to win the Starry blossom Festival, she will undoubtedly become a major obstacle.

Strictly speaking, it would be the entire Class 3-D to which she belongs.

But needless to say, the current third-year students have already passed the academy's advancement exams twice and are all talented individuals.

Just being in the third year should be enough reason to be cautious.

As I unconsciously harbored a sense of rivalry and gazed at the Student Council President from the line, she continued her greeting

with a dignified voice.

After giving her closing remarks, the Student Council President was followed by a blonde old lady, who appeared in her official attire as I had seen on the day of the entrance ceremony. Now, it was time for the Principal's speech, and while listening to it, I whispered to Mil, who was standing beside me.

"Hey, Mil?"

"Yes?"

"If I remember correctly, if there's a rampage, the Principal can teleport them away, right? Does that mean we don't have to do patrols or anything?"

Just to make sure, I wanted to confirm it. We had been entrusted by the Principal to handle any incidents of magical outbursts during the Starry blossom Festival. So far, there were no abnormalities during the opening ceremony, and I couldn't observe any significant changes among the surrounding spectators.

In such a situation where we didn't know when or where a rampage might occur, it seemed that the Principal could quickly sense any abnormalities and teleport us there.

"Yes, that's what she said. So it seems there's no need for patrols within the school."

"Then that means we can fully concentrate on the competitions."

That would be a great relief. However, it would be troublesome if we were called away during the competitions, so I hoped to be spared from that. It was said that one could refuse teleportation magic if they wished, so I mentioned that in case it became inconvenient.

"By the way, there are quite a number of students, aren't there? I wonder how many there are in total?"

As I looked around again and muttered, Mil, who was in front of me, glanced at me from the corner of her eye and informed me.

“There are classes A to J for first-year students, with approximately thirty students per class. So, at the time of enrollment, there were a little over three hundred first-year students. I’ve also heard that about thirty percent of the students leave the academy after the exams each year. So, the current total number of students would be... around six to seven hundred, I suppose?”

“Hmm, hearing that, I can’t quite tell if it’s many or few.”

Well, having nearly six hundred students who are the next generation of national magicians is still impressive, isn’t it?

We have to fight with those students in the form of competitions, although it’s not just about winning by ourselves, but combining the competition scores of the whole class.

Naturally, everyone was filled with a sense of tension.

“Ugh, can we really win...? If we end up with disappointing results, it will be troublesome for Maron-san...”

As Mil showed a similar anxious expression, I hugged her tightly from behind.

“Don’t worry about that. Mil, you have the highest magical power among the current students, and you’ve been practicing hard until today. Besides, we have Maron-san as our representative.”

Just as I finished speaking, I remembered something and furrowed my brow.

“Oh, but there are some competitions that Maron-san can’t participate in simultaneously, right? Can you participate together in the competitions that she’s in, Mil?”

“Yes. Maron-san, myself, and another person, Celri Blanchir, will participate as a team of three.”

“I see. I wanted to participate in the competitions together with Maron-san, but it turns out that she will be in a different competition at the same time as mine.”

The competitions are not limited to just this First Ground. They will also take place in the training grounds where I had a mock battle with Kaien Chiffonade.

In cases where competitions are held simultaneously, the representative can only participate in one, so there are competitions in which even Maron-san cannot participate.

One such competition is the “Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint” that I will be participating in today.

“With your abilities, Sach-san, I’m sure you’ll be fine on your own...”

“Well, of course, I don’t plan on losing, but more than that, I wanted to participate in the competitions with Maron-san and create memories together.”

If I can’t change Maron-san’s mother’s mind, this Starry blossom Festival might be our last chance to make memories together. That’s why I wanted to create memories with Maron-san... Sigh, what is my luck stat doing?

This event might mark the end of our class life with Maron-san. I wanted to share as many memories as possible.

As I secretly felt disappointed, Mil looked up at the clear sky and muttered.

“In a way, this might be the result of your luck stat at work...”

“Huh? What do you mean?”

“Certainly, not being able to create memories is a significant misfortune. However, due to the separation of your and Maron-san’s competitions, there is now a possibility to achieve high scores in both competitions, right?”

“...”

Hmm, I guess there’s that perspective too.

Although I can’t participate in the competitions with Maron-san, unintentionally, our strengths have been divided.

Maron-san, one of the top students in the academy, and Sachi-chan, the ultimate lucky girl with incredible magical abilities.

With the separation of these two, the possibility of achieving high scores in both competitions emerged.

If this is the result of my luck stat of 999, then I can certainly understand and accept it.

But still...

“...Mil, are you becoming more positive than me?”

“Well, faces are always oriented forward.”

Quoting the words I said, Mil flashed a mischievous smile and burst into laughter.

It seems she has grown in many ways as well.

Just at that moment, the Principal’s speech on the platform was

nearing its end.

“I hope to convey the gallant figures of the students who constantly strive and compete with each other through this Starry blossom Festival. Once again, I ask for your support and cheers for the students.”

Immediately, cheers and applause erupted from the surroundings.

The venue gradually filled with excitement, and the students, affected by it, became more motivated.

Trembling with excitement, I quietly ignited my fighting spirit.

I would showcase my abilities here and make my presence known in the world of magicians.

To rescue Mulbury-san from the Forest of sinners and to help my friend Maron-san.

I absolutely cannot afford to lose this battle.

“...With my luck stat of 999, how far can I shine?”

Now, finally, the long-awaited Starry blossom Festival begins.

Chapter 58

The Destiny of the Commoners

/ Level 999 / By IX

Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint.

The competition held at the training grounds is a full-throttle “race” among the aspiring national magicians.

It’s an event where they showcase their magical talents to the fullest, overcoming troublesome obstacles prepared along the course.

At times elegant, at times extreme, and at times like the wind, the magicians dash through a challenging path.

The spectacle was likened to a “sprint drama by superhumans,” and thus the competition came to be known as the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint.

“...Well, if you put it bluntly, it’s just an obstacle race.”

I glanced around the corner of the training grounds, quietly shrugging my shoulders.

Despite all the grandeur it presents, it’s ultimately just an obstacle race.

Of course, since the runners are magicians, the obstacles set up are quite challenging.

Walls that can only be overcome by using magic, platforms resembling swamps created by earth-based magic, courses with gusts of wind and flying embers.

They have to overcome these obstacles, adapt to the interference from other magicians, and aim for the goal—a competition truly designed for superhumans.

However, compared to other competitions, it lacks the same level of spectacle and is rather gritty, if you ask me.

That's why the training grounds, serving as the arena, aren't filled with many spectators, as most people are engrossed in another competition taking place on the field.

“...It seems like it's going to be difficult to stand out here.”

From the moment the competitions were announced, I had a feeling, but it seems that I won't be able to attract much attention in my participating event after all.

The competitions awaiting on the second and third day are also rather plain.

It was a great opportunity to make a name for myself in the world of magicians, but it seems like my plans won't go smoothly.

As I quietly let my shoulders slump, I see the participants gathering one after another at the training grounds.

Participants of the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint, ranging from first-year to third-year students.

A total of nearly sixty participants.

I have to compete with these people and earn competition points for our class.

“Well then, let's start with the draw.”

The members of the Starry blossom Festival executive committee say so, and each class is given a lottery ticket to draw.

The running combinations are determined by this lottery.

There are a total of twenty-one participating classes, and they are divided into seven groups.

As a result, three groups are formed, and one person from each group competes to determine the rankings from first to seventh.

This process is repeated three times, and the higher the rank, the more competition points are awarded.

Why three times? It's because each class has three participants, and the same person can't compete again.

"Hey, are we really okay doing this with just the three of us?"

As the lottery reaches its halfway point, a female student near me murmurs anxiously.

Then another male student nearby replies, somewhat exasperated.

"It's no use complaining about it now when it's already decided, right?"

"But still, I feel uneasy doing it with just the three of us. Wouldn't it have been better if Maron-san, the representative, had come here?"

"It's too late to wish for something that doesn't exist. We have no choice but to do it with the three of us."

The ones discussing are my classmates from Class 1A and fellow participants in the competition.

Radhi Monde, a male student with two-tone white and green hair.

Karot Julien, a female student with orange hair resembling sunshine.

The three of us are scheduled to participate in the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint together.

However, their faces still show signs of gloom.

And rightfully so, as the representative, Maron-san, is absent from this competition.

“If Maron were here, maybe we could have achieved a high rank in the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint...”

In some cases, even representatives who can participate in all the events may not be able to compete due to simultaneous competitions being held.

Currently, Maron-san is participating in the competition being held on the field, so we have to win here with just the three of us.

However, overall, the three of us have relatively low magical power, and the chances of defeating strong second and third-year students and achieving a high rank are quite low.

It's natural for the two of them to show signs of unease.

Perhaps driven by that unease, Radhi, who is fidgeting, looks at me and mutters with disdain.

“Hey, commoner, don't drag us down.”

“...”

I think you can infer from that one sentence, but I still have a strained relationship with my classmates.

It seems that they don't like the fact that I'm a commoner without any family background, despite being students at the same academy.

As a result, we have never practiced together for the competition, and this is the first time we are having a discussion like this.

Our teamwork is, frankly speaking, probably the worst.

"Hey, what about the running order?"

When Karot says that, Radhi, who has the highest magical power among us, takes on a leader-like role and starts considering it.

Come to think of it, we haven't decided on that yet.

While other classes have already determined their order and are fully prepared, we still haven't established any coordination.

Well, it's mostly because I've been left out.

"It would be better if I and Karot go first and second. I think the other classes will likely put their strongest runner in the later positions."

"If, if that's the case, shouldn't Radhi run last..."

"Even I would find it challenging to achieve a high rank among third and second-year students. So here, intentionally, I think it's better for me and Karot to go for points 'reliably' in the first and second groups. Let's have this commoner run in the third group, like a disposable piece. It's like a sacrificial strategy."

...Hmm.

I do think it's a smart strategy.

As Radhi says, I believe every class will place their confident runner in the later groups.

By observing the first and second groups, we can crush the classes that score well in the third group.

Although it's called an obstacle race, as long as it doesn't go too far, magical clashes between students are permitted in the competition.

It's even possible to deliberately obstruct specific classes.

That's why it's considered standard to have a strong individual in the third group.

In addition to that reason, simply because the third group is the grand finale, it tends to attract attention, making it more likely for skilled individuals to concentrate there.

"We never expected anything from this commoner from the beginning. If we let her participate in the first group and even get last place, it would be the worst outcome. In that case, it's better to bring her to the third group as a disposable piece. Losing the final competition points is frustrating, but if the two of us can earn points, it should be enough."

"Well, if Radhi says so..."

"..."

It really feels like they don't trust me at all.

Well, I am a commoner without any family background, and I even scored an unprecedented "1" in the magical power assessment.

It's strange to expect anything from someone like me.

That's why the strategy of putting me in the third group as a disposable piece and ensuring points in the first and second groups ourselves seems clever.

"That's the plan. You don't have to do anything special. Just make sure you don't disgrace Class A and run all the way to the end."

With those words, Radhi turned his back to me.

Karot, perhaps due to her timid personality, doesn't show obvious hostility, but she avoids any interaction with me and lowers her gaze.

"Hmm..."

Is there any way to improve our relationship?

Since the Starry blossom Festival is an opportunity to cooperate with my classmates, I want to use this chance to foster better relationships.

If we don't coordinate well, it might hinder our performance in future competitions as well.

"Next up is the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint, which will be held at the training grounds. If you wish to watch, please come to the spectator seats at the training grounds."

As if influenced by the anxieties of the two, a slightly restless feeling stirs within me as the announcement echoes through the school by magic.

Chapter 59

Just Lucky

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Now, runners from Group 1, please take your positions.”

Upon the announcer’s command, the participants began to take their positions at the starting point.

Karot from my class, 1-A, was also participating.

“Don’t get too worked up, Karot. Just follow the practice routine,” Ladhy said.

“Y-Yes...!” Karot replied nervously.

Receiving advice from Ladhy, Karot took a few deep breaths and made her way to the starting point.

There were numerous obstacles visible on the course.

To clear the course, participants had to overcome all these obstacles and reach the finish line.

The use of teleportation magic was prohibited, and high-impact magic with lethal capabilities was also forbidden.

However, limited contact between students within reasonable limits was allowed, so various hindrances were expected.

Especially the second and third-year students, who had already experienced many simulated battles, would have extensive knowledge in dealing with magicians.

In such a disadvantageous situation, it was impossible not to feel nervous.

Nevertheless, Karot arrived at the starting point with a determined expression and assumed a focused stance.

“Take your positions. On your marks... Start!”

With that command, the sprint race of the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint began for Group 1.

The runners darted out from the starting point simultaneously, while starting their magic incantations.

Up to this point, everyone's movements were the same.

However, from here, differences gradually began to emerge.

Some attempted to enhance their running speed with body enhancement magic.

Others immediately tried to hinder other students.

“The runners have started their magic incantations while running! Even before colliding with obstacles, intense clashes are already taking place!”

The course formed an oval-shaped arena, encircling it completely.

Under normal circumstances, without obstacles or hindrances, one could complete the race in about two to three minutes.

By using body enhancement magic, it should be possible to run in under a minute.

Using body enhancement magic from the beginning was considered standard, as it also improved response to obstacles.

However...

“Slip Chain of the Successful Stumbler!”

Out of the seven runners, five activated body enhancement magic, and at the same time, transparent chains wrapped around their feet.

Instantly, the movements of those who were bound by the chains became sluggish.

That was “Slip Chain of the Successful Stumbler,” a weakening magic that reduced the target’s speed.

Once caught in those chains, even if they had become stronger with body enhancement magic, their speed would hardly increase.

The strategy seemed to prioritize personal enhancement and prevent others from surpassing rather than pushing oneself forward.

One third-year student successfully executed that strategy, impeding the movements of other first and second-year students.

Meanwhile, our 1-A runner...

“Well done, Karot,” murmured Ladhy, who was quietly observing the competition near me.

Karot had anticipated the use of hindrance magic and was running slightly behind the other runners.

And while others were fighting in the front, she was quietly casting her body enhancement magic at the very back, without being disturbed by anyone.

That way, she could enhance herself safely without being affected by hindrance magic.

It was a cautious strategy befitting Karot, who was somewhat timid and careful, and it fit perfectly in the first race, where aggressive individuals gathered.

As planned, while other participants were engaged in a struggle in the front, Karot finished casting her body enhancement magic.

The moment the magic effect flowed through her entire body, Karot surged ahead, leaving the other runners behind.

Even the third-year student who had been leading with hindrance magic couldn't catch up with Karot because he was unable to finish casting his body enhancement magic in time.

"Oh! The one who broke through is a first-year student from Class 1-A!"

Karot carefully crossed over the obstacles, maintaining the forefront without being hindered by anyone.

She had surely dedicated herself to training for the competition, as she effortlessly navigated through various obstacles like adhesive nets and paralyzing boards, protecting her position at the front until the very end.

However...

"Surprisingly, a student from Class 3-B surpassed her right before the finish line!"

In the nick of time, a third-year student caught up and overtook Karot, resulting in her finishing second.

Though she felt frustrated, it was still an impressive achievement.

With this performance, there was hope for a good score in the competition.

Karot returned, showing a mix of excitement and fatigue, and called out to Ladhy with a smile.

“I-I did it, Ladhy...! I managed to get second place!”

“See, didn’t I tell you? The early groups aren’t that big of a deal,” Ladhy replied.

The two reassured each other, and then Ladhy rolled up his sleeves and headed towards the starting point.

“Well, now it’s my turn.”

“Good luck, Ladhy!”

As I silently cheered him on in my mind, I unexpectedly overheard a faint conversation from the person next to me.

“Hey, that class...”

“So, that’s the runner from Class 1-A...”

“...”

It seemed that there was some attention on Ladhy as he headed towards the starting point.

A sense of unease began to grow within me, and that unease materialized in the form of the second race.

Encouraged by Karot's good performance, Ladhy entered the second race with high spirits, but...

"N-No way...! Ladhy..."

The result was seventh place.

Last place.

Karot, who believed in Ladhy's abilities, was left speechless by the outcome.

"In the second group race, the third-year students dominated the top positions! It seems the difference in experience is showing..."

Well, it was not surprising considering there were three third-year participants.

The difference in experience played a significant role, and above all...

Ladhy, who suffered a crushing defeat, returned to us, gritting his teeth in humiliation.

"...S-Sorry. I messed up."

"L-Ladhy, it's not your fault. After all, you were targeted by other classes..."

After Karot achieved a good result in the first race, Ladhy from Class 1-A became the target of everyone's attention.

Perhaps it was thought that it would be easier to bring down the second-place first-year student rather than the first-place third-year student.

Numerous hindrance magic spells attacked Ladhy, resulting in his unfortunate seventh-place finish among the seven participants.

Well, since it was the Starry blossom Festival where competition points were being contested, it was only natural for other classes to come and try to take down the class that seemed likely to score high.

There was no help for it.

“Damn it! I was supposed to get first place and earn points for the competition...! At this rate...”

Second place and seventh place.

Indeed, with these results, we wouldn’t receive high scores.

We wouldn’t come any closer to our goal of winning the Starry blossom Festival.

Due to that, both Karot and Ladhy slumped down in a deeply dejected state.

They likely felt unable to face our classmates who were cheering for us in the spectator seats or our comrades participating in other events on the field.

“...”

Sensing their feelings, I called out to the two who were looking down.

“The competition isn’t over yet, you know.”

“...Huh?”

Ladhy and Karot’s gaze turned towards me.

Ladhy, seemingly unable to shake off the bitterness of his defeat, lashed out at me with a venomous tone.

“What do you mean it’s not over...? There’s no one else left...! What can you possibly do...?!”

He glared at me with that same disdainful look he often gave me in class.

“With a magic power value of only ‘1,’ the lowest in the school, and being a commoner without a family emblem, do you really think you can rely on tricks to somehow make it? I don’t need your worthless jokes!”

It seemed that I was still not trusted at all, and Karot also looked at me with a worried expression.

With the lowest magic power value in the school and no family emblem, I was just an ordinary commoner.

Certainly, it would be foolish to expect anything from someone like me.

But...

“...W-Well, I managed to get through the entrance exam and the end-of-term exams, and now I’m here in Class 1-A.

Maybe I can somehow handle this competition too?”

I told Ladhy, despite lacking any basis for my confidence.

In response, he became even more infuriated, veins popping on his forehead.

“That’s just... luck with the entrance exam and end-of-term exams...!

You can't possibly win this competition with just that. The third group consists of talented second and third-year students. A magic power value of 1 commoner won't stand a chance against them!"

"...Just luck, huh?"

It was a rather apt, unintentional remark.

I couldn't help but let out a smile.

"Yeah, I guess it's just luck for me. But with just that, I've managed to survive here as a student of Class 1-A. So, 'magic power value this, magic power value that is not all there is to it, it's better not to judge people solely based on that.

Anyway, leave it to me and just watch from here."

"..."

As they witnessed my confident behavior, Ladhy and Karot stared at me in surprise.

While feeling their gazes on my back, I headed towards the starting point of the third race.

Just before that...

"Oh, and one more thing..."

I suddenly stopped and turned back to Ladhy, a deep smile appearing on my face.

"Don't underestimate 'luck' too much."

I'll show them the power of luck.

Chapter 60

The Terrifying Lucky Girl

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Alright, runners from Group 3, please take your positions.”

Following the instructions from the announcer, I made my way to the starting point. Participants from other classes were also gathering, and the tension for the main event was building up.

And then...

“Hmm?”

I suddenly felt strange gazes from around me. It seemed like the participants were paying attention to me.

Moreover, I could hear conversations like this:

“Hey, that silver-haired girl...”

“So, the rumors were true?”

...About me?

I don’t recall being the subject of any rumors, especially since I don’t have any connections with students from other grades.

As I pondered about this, I suddenly caught sight of a “blonde hair with vertical curls” at the edge of my vision.

“Oh my, it seems quite muddy around here, doesn’t it?”

It was the hair of a female student who approached from the side. She had long, golden hair elegantly styled, and she was adorned with expensive-looking accessories. Judging by the green accent on her uniform, she appeared to be a second-year student.

Despite maintaining a fixed gaze, she scrutinized me condescendingly, and suddenly displayed an exaggerated reaction.

“Oh my? Could it be my mistake? It seems like there’s no family crest anywhere on your uniform.”

“...”

Ah, I see.

Just by the way she approached me, I could already deduce what kind of person this blonde-haired, vertical curls upperclassman was. And it also made sense why I was receiving so much attention.

Most likely, rumors had spread even among the second and third-year students that a commoner like me, who doesn’t wear a family crest, had enrolled. That’s why my lack of a family crest drew their gazes.

So, this blonde-haired upperclassman, with her twisted smirk, came to “tease” me, a commoner. This school really has a lot of people like her...

“What happened to your family crest? Could it be that you dropped it somewhere? If that’s the case, I would be happy to help you search for it!”

...Well, I never had one to begin with.

“You don’t have it? You mean to say you don’t possess a family crest? I can’t possibly believe that a commoner like you could pass through the gates of this school!”

Her loud voice attracted even more attention from the surroundings. Disapproving gazes were directed at me, and faint laughter could be heard.

Feeling uncomfortable with all of that, I tried to distance myself from the upperclassman. However...

“No wonder it’s so muddy around here. It’s said that commoners often kneel on the ground and beg for alms, so their clothes are always covered in dirt, or so I’ve heard.”

If I were to retreat now, it would seem as if I were running away, and that would be frustrating.

So, I endured it in that moment.

The blonde-haired upperclassman, seemingly aware of the teachers’ presence, suddenly lowered her voice and whispered.

“It’s quite surprising that such a dirty commoner was allowed to enroll in this school. Perhaps it would be better for you to learn how to wash your body before learning magic, don’t you think?”

“...”

Next, she covered her nose with her uniform sleeve and displayed open disgust.

“I have a bit of a cleanliness obsession, and I absolutely detest anything dirty. Especially being in the same space as commoners who grew up in bad environments. So, I would be grateful if you could just drop out already.”

It seems that she holds a particular animosity towards commoners more than other students. The fact that we’re in the same school seems to bother her, and she seems determined to drive me out.

“...It’s unfortunate, but I can’t leave this school just yet, so I can’t fulfill your wish.”

“In that case, I’ll show you during this competition. I’ll thoroughly demonstrate how out of place a commoner like you is.

I’ll make you taste the fragility of your talent and force you to drop out.”

Saying so, the blonde-haired upperclassman headed towards her own starting position.

While silently sighing in exasperation, I took my position as well.

I still felt the scornful gazes and mocking laughter from those around me.

Truly, the aristocratic bloodline fanatics in this school...

They judge and make assumptions based solely on someone being a commoner, without even trying to see their true nature.

While I can understand if they speak ill of me to some extent, I can’t tolerate comments that belittle even Mil, who also doesn’t wear a family crest.

Well, it’s a perfect opportunity to make everyone understand.

“Take your positions, ready... Start!”

The Spirit Sprint race for Group 3 began.

Immediately after the signal, the runners dashed forward from the starting line, chanting spells as they aimed for the finish line.

“Oh! One of the first-year students has actually started chanting their spell on the spot! Did they fall behind?”

The commentator’s narration suddenly stopped. And it was understandable because among all the participants who had started running, there was only one person who was “completely motionless.” Well, that would be me.

“Oops! One of the first-year students is actually chanting their spell on the spot! Did they start late?”

Witnessing me standing still at the starting line and chanting my spell, the onlookers were astonished. And Rady, from the same class, shouted in frustration.

“I-Idiot! Start running already!”

But I remained unaffected by his voice and continued chanting in place.

I had decided to learn from Karote’s strategy.

A tactic of casting magic at a slight distance from everyone, deliberately staying one step behind. This way, I could cast enhancement magic without anyone interfering.

I thought that if I did this from the starting line, I would undoubtedly avoid any interference.

Considering that there were unpleasant seniors directing their animosity solely towards me, it was best to ensure absolute safety by doing it this way.

It was true that I would fall behind by quite a bit, but I could easily catch up with just a little delay. After all, my body enhancement magic was completely different from ordinary body enhancement magic.

“[Foolish Brute Force: Grand Deal]!”

In an instant, my entire body was enveloped in a deep crimson light. Boosted by that light, my body became as light as a feather, and power surged from every joint.

In front of me, hindering magic and minor offensive magic flew about, but I paid no mind as I propelled myself off the ground.

I sliced through the air with my entire body. The scenery flowed past me. Leaving the sound behind.

In the blink of an eye, I caught up with everyone.

“What the hell!”

“What’s with her?”

A probability-based magic that allowed me to enhance my physical abilities to the extreme—[Foolish Brute Force: Grand Deal].

Unlike other body enhancement magic, whether or not I could enhance myself was left to chance.

If it failed, it would even have the effect of lowering my physical abilities. However, in exchange, when it succeeded, the explosive power was significant, far surpassing ordinary body enhancement magic.

That’s why, at this moment, I obtained a body faster than anyone else.

“Amazing! The first-year student, who was supposed to be left behind, is surpassing the other runners one after another!”

Of course, the other participants didn’t just stand there in surprise; they devised strategies to stop me.

The third-year student running just ahead of me started chanting a long-range attack spell while glancing back at me.

“[The enemy is right here—Crimson Blaze—Become one and shoot through the magic]”

Reflexively, I also moved my lips.

“[The arrival of peace—Heavenly Guardian—Protect the powerless]”

In an instant, the two incantations overlapped.

“[Burning Sphere Flame Sphere]!”

“[Momentary Peace Aegis Fried]!”

From the third-year student’s hand, a dangerously close fireball was launched. At the same time, a silver light burst from my body.

Thanks to the magic’s effect, the fireball that was supposed to hit me was blocked by an invisible barrier at the last moment.

“What?!”

The fireball then vanished like a candle being extinguished with water.

A magic that nullifies magical attacks with a probability of one in a hundred thousand for thirty minutes—[Momentary Peace Aegis Fried].

With this, I could nullify all the hindering magic from other students...

“Oh, I could have used this magic from the beginning.”

I thought belatedly that it would have been safer to use this magic at the starting line. By becoming able to nullify attack magic, I could have used [Foolish Brute Force: Grand Deal] without any issues and easily caught up to everyone.

...Honestly, I feel like I could just rely on [Foolish Brute Force: Grand Deal] alone to deflect all the magic.

“What is she? That commoner!”

The blonde-haired upperclassman, who was running ahead of me, was astonished by my fierce progress. Gradually closing the distance, she turned around and prepared to face me with her “bare hands.”

“If it comes to this, I’ll use brute force!”

Having seen that the previous student’s magic didn’t work, she seemed to have devised a plan to stop me with her physical strength. She must have thought that she could overpower me since she was already using body enhancement magic.

However...

“Kyaa!”

The quality of our body enhancement magic was regrettably too different.

As I was about to pass by, the blonde-haired upperclassman reached out and grabbed my shoulder. But with the momentum granted by [Foolish Brute Force: Grand Deal]...

The upperclassman was blown away like a piece of paper.

“Ah...”

If someone had been watching from the side, it would have appeared as if a carriage had run over a baby rabbit.

Moreover, due to the impact, the blonde-haired upperclassman was blown backward and unluckily fell into a “muddy swamp” obstacle.

Thanks to that, the impact was mitigated, but her whole body ended up covered in mud.

“H-How dare you... get my uniform dirty!”

I didn't intend to blow her away; she reached out to me on her own...

With those thoughts in mind, I passed by the senior and continued running.

There was no one ahead of me anymore.

The obstacles, such as the adhesive nets, paralyzing panels, and moving floors, were all created by magic. So the moment I touched them, all obstacles became nullified.

“What's happening?! The obstacles have no effect on the first-year student!”

The adhesive nets, paralysis panels, and moving floors were all ineffective against me.

To me, this competition wasn't an obstacle race but just a jog, no different from before.

“Alright, I've reached the goal.”

With a significant lead, I reached the finish line.

Normally, the crowd would cheer when the first-place runner crosses the finish line, but the surroundings were silent.

The members of the Star Flower Festival organizing committee, who were waiting at the finish line, just stared at me in disbelief.

“...F-First place, Class A, first-year.”

Delayed applause and sporadic clapping could be heard along with that announcement.

The spectators seemed to be struggling to understand what just happened. Well, they probably haven't heard of a magic that nullifies magic before.

Nevertheless, this competition lacks a bit of excitement, doesn't it?

Even though I won by a large margin, I didn't use any flashy magic, so the audience's reaction is subdued.

I really wanted to participate in a more attention-grabbing event.

Anyway, I safely secured first place and received a golden makeshift badge from the organizing committee.

At that moment, the muddy girl arrived at the finish line.

“I-I... To such a commoner...!”

Covered in mud, she was unrecognizable for a moment, but it was the blonde-haired upperclassman.

Perhaps due to being pushed by me, she finished in fifth place.

It seemed like she was disappointed with her lackluster result.

While glaring at me wearing the first-place badge, she clenched her teeth in frustration.

It looked like she was about to complain, so I deliberately covered my nose with my sleeve.

“Since you’re so muddy, why don’t you go wash up quickly, senpai?”

“——!”

Blushing intensely, the senior ran off towards the training ground’s shower room.

Secretly sticking out my tongue and watching her leave, I returned to where my classmates were waiting.

Rady and Karot were still frozen in astonishment.

I tossed the first-place badge onto Rady’s chest and shrugged my shoulders.

“Here’s the first prize.”

“...”

“See, I told you. Don’t underestimate luck. And let’s not judge someone’s worth based on their magical power or birth anymore, okay?”

Finally, Rady snapped out of it and relaxed.

He glanced down at the first-place badge he received and bit his lip in frustration.

He wasn’t satisfied with his seventh-place finish and especially

couldn't accept that I took first place.

Moreover, I participated in the magic category's third race. It's only natural for him to feel frustrated.

So...

"I'm fine if you still don't like me. You don't have to be friends with me. But since I want to win this Star Flower Festival, can't we cooperate with each other at least during this festival?"

"..."

Rady widened his eyes in surprise once again.

Then, seemingly lost in thought, he fell silent and looked down.

I guess he still doesn't like me after all.

It seems difficult for us to be on good terms, but just as I was about to feel disheartened...

"...Let's go together to report the results."

"..."

Rady, without meeting my gaze, said that as if acknowledging my existence.

And he led me and Karot towards our classmates waiting at the first ground.

Karot also seemed to have been avoiding me, but she quietly said, "Good job," as we walked.

By the way...

“Can you teach me about the magic you used earlier later?”

“Oh, yeah. That’s totally fine...”

Since I was also asked to explain probability magic, I would explain it to Karot later.

This might be...

“...A little step forward, I guess?”

After this competition, I felt like I had gotten a little closer to my classmates.

Chapter 61

Anticipation and Jealousy

/ [Level 999](#) / By [IX](#)

After the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint ended, I returned to the second-floor cheering section where Class 1-A was located. I was currently cheering for the ongoing event, the “Soulful Ball Monster Bag.” Well, I was a bit separated from the rest of the class.

“The Soulful Ball Monster Bag is reaching its climax! With only three minutes remaining, will a class be able to overturn the rankings?”

The Soulful Ball Monster Bag, like the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint, had a somewhat extravagant name, but in essence, it was just a game of “throwing balls into a basket.” The simple rule was that the class that managed to put the most balls into the basket would win.

However...

“Oh! The students from Class 1-C are having trouble catching the

Feather-Eyed Pupil! It seems challenging for them to make a comeback!”

The balls to be put into the basket were not ordinary balls but “Feather-Eyed Pupils,” virtual “magical beasts” created to resemble real magical beasts. They had an appearance with bat-like wings on their eyeballs and were capable of high-speed flight using an internal magical energy furnace. They were programmed to react to the magic elements of magicians and exhibit evasive actions. Due to their small size, they could fly and move at super speeds with minimal magical energy, making them nearly impossible for ordinary people to capture.

I learned about this from Senior Pitaja, who loves studying magical tools. Even for us magicians, capturing a single one is quite difficult. It requires accurate judgment of the situation and skillful use of magic. By the way, if a Feather-Eyed Pupil is accidentally damaged, it doesn’t count towards the score when put in the basket, so “capture” is the essential premise, making it more challenging.

“While many classes are struggling, Class 1-A has surpassed 100 points! Since the previous highest score was 98 points, this is already a new record!”

As such a broadcast flowed, the spectator seats were filled with loud cheers. Hearing those voices, I unintentionally smiled wryly.

“... They’re really getting into it, huh?”

The reaction was completely different from the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint that took place in the training grounds earlier. It’s truly enviable. Moreover, among the participants from Class 1-A this time, Mil was also included. With her wide range of ice magic, she was stopping the movements of Feather-Eyed Pupils and capturing multiple ones at once, earning points. Representative Maron was also there, so with the outstanding performance of the two, Class 1-A was leading by a large margin.

...Mill, she’s really standing out more than me.

I inwardly clenched my teeth in frustration. And then, I suddenly heard the voices of my classmates cheering.

“Go, Maron!”

“Baldanu and Pershi won’t lose!”

“...”

...And Mill, why don’t you cheer for her too?

It sounded like there were only three participants, but the actual participants were Maron, Baldanu, Pershi, and Mill, four people in total. She was completely excluded from the cheering, probably due to being a commoner and standing in the position of scholarship students.

It’s unfortunate, so I should stop this.

“...Go, Mil.”

I cheered for Mill, though it was a small gesture. Perhaps thanks to that, Mill managed to score three times in a row, and the event came to an end. As a result, Class 1-A took first place, with a total score of 112 points, widening the gap by 20

points with the second-place class. We were able to earn more class points and move closer to victory in the Starry blossom Festival.

Afterward, there was a short break until the next event started. While my classmates started chatting with each other, I decided to wait alone until Mil returned. I sat at the back of the spectator seats, which were arranged in a staircase-like manner...

“Hey there!”

“Ah, Poire-san!”

Suddenly, my classmate Poire-san came over from the next seat and called out to me.

As usual, she seemed sleepy.

It was unusual for her to initiate a conversation, so I couldn't help but tilt my head in confusion.

Poire-san sat down on the seat next to me and yawned as she spoke.

“Congratulations on getting first place.”

“Huh? Ah, you mean the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint. Yeah, thanks.”

It seemed she had heard the results of the previous event from someone. She came to congratulate me for getting first place, and I smiled and thanked her.

“Good job in the competition too, Poire-san. I heard you had a great performance.”

“Well...,” she responded nonchalantly, but I had heard that she achieved remarkable results.

While I was participating in the obstacle race at the training grounds, another event was taking place at the stadium.

There, Poire-san had made a splendid performance that propelled Class 1-A to the top position.

She had garnered a lot of attention from the audience, and I could still feel occasional glances from various directions.

As expected of someone who had obtained the second highest support

rate through representative recommendation.

However, Poire-san herself deliberately tried to avoid attention and seemed to shrink beside me.

Could it be...

“...Poire-san, did you come to me because you don’t want to be approached by others?”

“...Talking to Sachi-san doesn’t tire me out much. But talking to others, it’s a bit tiring.”

As she trailed off, Poire-san shrank even further, resembling a small animal.

She had received too much attention due to her previous performance, and it seemed that unwanted interference from strangers had increased.

Because it was tiring for Poire-san, she sought refuge with me, who she could comfortably talk to.

Talking with me didn’t tire her out much. That was somewhat gratifying to hear, but...

“It’s a luxurious concern, huh?”

“What do you mean?”

“Ah, no, I was just thinking that you don’t seem to enjoy being in the spotlight like others. You see, everyone wants to stand out and demonstrate their abilities on this occasion. Do you not have such aspirations, Poire-san?”

I want to become famous in the industry quickly so I can free Mulbury-san from the Forest of Sinners.

“I don’t particularly need to become famous. I enjoy giving it my moderate best during the Starry blossom Festival and then sleeping soundly afterward. That’s the most enjoyable thing for me right now.”

“That’s very much like you, Poire-san... By the way, why did you decide to enter the Magic Academy in the first place?”

My impression of Poire-san was that she was always listless and dozing off.

I didn’t sense any special desire to become a National Magician.

If she didn’t want to become famous as a magician, why did she come to this Magic Academy?

Once again, I received a response that was very much like Poire-san.

“Becoming a National Magician means you can live an easy life.”

“Easy?”

“You receive research funding and money without having to work hard. That way, even if you’re sleeping all the time, you won’t get scolded, right?”

“...I think research funding is meant to be used for research purposes.”

But, yeah, I understand what you’re trying to say.

In essence, you want to become a National Magician to live an easy life and have passive income. That way, you can indulge in your

beloved naps all the time.

But being a National Magician is no different from being a direct subordinate of the government, so I think you'll face various troubles and responsibilities.

I didn't want to spoil that dream for her, so I didn't mention these complications.

"Well, I have a rough idea of what you're aiming for, Poire-san. If that's the case, it makes sense that you don't want to stand out."

"Standing out isn't always a good thing. When you stand out too much, you have to talk to many people. It reduces your sleeping time, you know?"

"Well, for Poire-san, that could be a big problem."

Studying less, sleeping more. Eating less, sleeping more. Playing less, sleeping more.

For someone who prioritizes sleep like her, having her sleep time reduced would be akin to torture.

That's why I feel a sense of happiness that she's talking to me like this.

As I secretly thought about that, Poire-san seemed to be gazing into the distance and muttered softly.

"Also, a lot of expectations and jealousy will be directed at you."

"Expectations and jealousy...?"

"When many people are watching you, it means they will have various feelings towards you. That can be tiring and difficult."

“...”

So, standing out too much isn't necessarily a good thing.

With her drowsy eyes, Poire-san seemed to imply that as she looked at me.

Well, I feel like I understand what she's trying to say.

It carried even more conviction coming from Poire-san, who already garnered a lot of attention.

“Standing out too much isn't good, huh? Yeah, I'll keep that in mind.”

“...Yeah, that's good.”

“But you know, in the end, isn't it the most saddening thing to go unnoticed by anyone? I think indifference is more cruel than expectations or jealousy...”

“Tomorrow and the day after tomorrow, there will be more competitions. If it's Sachi's abilities, I believe that someday everyone will notice. So, do your best.”

“I hope so...”

With such trivial exchange, we spent the time until the next competition began.

Chapter 62

The Price of Attention

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Once Again, Class 1-A Claims the Top Spot! Will this year’s Starry blossom Festival be dominated by the rising star, overshadowing the upperclassmen?”

After the conclusion of the Monstrous Bag competition, in a corner of the cheering section where Class 2-C gathered, Mce Gracier sighed while listening to the broadcast.

“...Tch.”

Clearly displeased, Maiss’s classmates couldn’t help but shrink back in response.

Then, the students who had participated with Maiss in the Monstrous Bag Magic competition timidly approached and spoke to him.

“Um, sorry, Maiss-kun.”

“We’ve only been holding you back, Maiss...”

“...”

Maiss scratched his head without saying a word, and seeing his frustrated expression, his classmates became even more apprehensive.

Bowing their heads once again, they left the scene.

Class 2-C, to which Maiss belonged, had achieved excellent results in numerous competitions thus far. However, they always fell just short

of claiming the top spot, experiencing frustrating outcomes.

As the chosen representative, Maiss demonstrated remarkable performance that lived up to his reputation, and his classmates wholeheartedly supported him.

Nevertheless, their efforts fell short due to the outstanding performances of another class.

(Class 1-A...)

In every competition, Class 1-A, the highly anticipated rising stars, outshone them. They had already prevented Class 2-C

from claiming the top spot several times, making them formidable rivals.

Despite being only first-year students, they possessed exceptionally talented individuals who were on par with second and third-year students.

In the Monstrous Bag Magic competition, Milyu Grasse, a first-year scholarship student, showcased her talents. She was an ordinary citizen but possessed one of the highest magical power levels in the academy and excelled in powerful ice magic.

There was also Poire Mure, who played a significant role in pushing Class 1-A to the top position in the previous competition. With a magic power level exceeding 250, she was a skilled lightning magic user with rare yellow magical essence.

In the competitions where these two participated, every class suffered a significant defeat, unable to match their abilities.

Moreover, Class 1-A had a lineup of skilled magicians in every discipline, consistently achieving high scores in every competition.

And above all, there was a troublesome individual...

(...Maron Melange)

The representative of Class 1-A, Maron Melange.

Her achievements were remarkable, as she dominated every competition she participated in as a representative, securing the first place in all of them. While her magical power level didn't reach the same heights as the scholarship student MiltYu, her sharp judgment and extensive knowledge were terrifying.

Precisely assessing the situation, deploying the optimal magic, and flawlessly assisting her teammates, she became the pillar of Class 1-A, drawing the most attention in the ongoing Starry blossom Festival.

As representatives, Maiss and Maron often clashed in competitions. Even those who observed their abilities up close could intuitively sense that Maron stood apart from the other students.

As long as Maron Melange remained formidable, it would be difficult to dismantle Class 1-A.

(What should I do...?)

Maiss held his head, contemplating how to overcome the current situation. Just then, a few students returned to the cheering section of Class 2-C.

“Oh, the ones from the training field are back.”

It seemed that the students who had been competing in the training field events had returned, and everyone offered words of encouragement to them, feeling exhausted.

“You did well. How did it go?”

“Nah, impossible. The third-years are still too strong. They outscored us in almost every event.”

Upon hearing that, Maiss suddenly stood up and eagerly asked the student in front of him.

“What about Class 1-A?”

“Huh, the first-years? W-Well...? I think there were some amazing ones, but in the end, the third-years dominated the overall rankings.”

“...”

Apparently, they didn't leave much of an impression in the training field, and it was the imposing presence of the third-year students that drew attention.

Indeed, when considering the results, the third-year class consistently occupied the top positions in every event.

“While Class 1-A is undoubtedly a threat, it's when their representative, Maron Melange, is present that things become the most dangerous.”

“From what I heard, they've taken first place in every event so far.”

“On the other hand, if we focus on the training field events, we might be able to narrow the point gap, right? If we make a comeback there, we might advance to Group A on the third day, don't you think?”

At that moment, another classmate stepped forward and suggested, as if just coming up with the idea.

“Well, then, should we try to avoid scheduling Maiss and Maron's events at the same time? We can start the process of making changes from now on...”

Maiss's eyebrows twitched upon hearing that. Succumbing to his rising frustration, he confronted one of his classmates.

"Are you suggesting that I run away?"

"N-No, that's not what I meant...! It's just that if you're going to be outscored by Maron in Class 1-A's event anyway, it might be better for Maiss to compete elsewhere and secure points more reliably."

The classmate quickly added as an explanation.

"It's not that we think Maiss is inferior to Maron or anything. It's just that we can't win against her in the event she's in because we've been holding you back."

"..."

An uneasy atmosphere settled within Class 2-C. But another student spoke up, managing to dispel the unpleasant mood.

"Well, unless we have a 'compelling reason,' we can't change the events we participate in. It's a rule, and it might be difficult to make those changes."

"Y-Yeah, you're right."

In the end, they decided to participate in the events as currently scheduled, and the conversation settled down.

Later on, Maiss returned to his seat, holding his head once again. It would be difficult to win the Starry blossom Festival as things stood. Maron Melange leading Class 1-A was undoubtedly a threat, but the skilled third-year students were also dominating the events.

If they weren't careful, it would be precarious whether they could

advance to Group A on the third day.

(I will definitely seize the victory in the end...!)

After that, the competitions resumed, and the first day of the Starry blossom Festival concluded smoothly.

Chapter 63

Second Day

/ Level 999 / By IX

On the second day of the Starry blossom Festival, just like the previous day, a large crowd of spectators gathered at the academy.

The enthusiasm and excitement remained as strong as ever, showing no signs of fading.

Naturally, the students' motivation was high, and I too was filled with excitement.

So I thought to myself, "Alright, today I'm going to stand out!" But...

"Why am I always stuck in the training grounds?"

Unfortunately, the competition I would be participating in that day was also held in the training grounds.

It was called "Spirit Capture: Ghost Snatch."

It was an indoor competition where participants had to touch the released spirits to earn points.

In simple terms, it was like a game of "tag."

We had to chase after a magical beast called "Lumiere," summoned by the teachers using summoning magic, in groups of three.

Although Lumiere was considered a type of magical beast, it had no harmful intent and no physical form.

It was more like a mere “cluster of light” and would disappear when it overlapped with a person’s body—a fleeting and elusive magical creature.

Its existence was faint, and some even argued that it deviated from the concept of magical beasts.

Because of that, it seemed Lumiere had no magical damage even from summoning magic, which was considered dangerous in other cases. Only “Light Spirit Summoning” was permitted for this competition.

“If I remember correctly, Lumiere is divided into different ‘types’ based on color, right? Around five colors?”

“It’s not five, but seven types. Seven-colored Lumiere. Each color has different abilities, so the points you get for capturing them also vary.”

I overheard such a conversation from nearby the training grounds.

Yes, in this competition, it wasn’t just about chasing and touching Lumiere. Lumiere was divided into seven different colors, and each color had a unique ability.

It required precise analysis, or focusing on capturing high-scoring Lumiere, among other strategies. It was a competition that demanded various tactics.

Of course, we also had to consider interference from other classes.

With all this information, one might think it would be quite a flashy competition and attract attention. But unfortunately, just like the recent Spirit Sprint, it would take place in the training grounds.

As a result, it lacked the same level of attention.

The main crowd was drawn to the outdoor stadium, so there weren’t many spectators here.

“...Oh well, I guess there’s no helping it.”

Let’s accept it and do our best with what we can. As Mil said, we were fortunate that our team’s strengths were well-distributed, so I should feel relieved about that.

...But still, it’s not very appealing to me.

Anyway, if I can shine here as well, I can still catch the attention of the spectators to some extent.

So once again, I gathered my determination and thought, ‘I’ll do my best even in the training grounds!’ But...

“You don’t have to do anything special.”

“...”

One of my classmates participating in the Spirit Capture: Ghost Snatch competition shattered my expectations with those words.

It was Obergeine, a classmate from Class 1A.

She had long black hair braided into three strands, a cool-looking face, and glasses perched on her nose.

She seemed like the type who would be the student council president or something similar, and she appeared very serious. However, it seems she also disliked commoners like the other students.

“In this Spirit Capture: Ghost Snatch, just me and Asperge will be enough. Please stay in the back and make sure not to hold us back.”

“! ...!”

Another Class 1A classmate, Asperge Blanche, nodded while hiding behind Obergeine.

She had long flowing emerald-green hair, and her bangs were so long that they mostly covered her eyes.

With a petite figure comparable to Mil and Poire, she was extremely quiet and always clung to Obergeine's back, seemingly filled with fear.

She communicated mainly by nodding or shaking her head, making it quite difficult to interact with her.

So, I would be participating in the Spirit Capture: Ghost Snatch with these two, but judging from their first words, I couldn't help but feel a bit worried about what lay ahead.

"I've been listening to your story, from Karlotte. It seems your luck is abnormally high, and you're approaching the competition using probability magic," said Obergeine,

She was referring to a classmate who participated with me in the Superhuman Sprint Spirit Sprint yesterday. I had become a bit closer to her and explained about probability magic. She asked if she could share it with other classmates, and I agreed. It seems like everyone knows about it now. I thought they might have some expectations of me because of it, but...

"However, relying solely on luck-based magic won't help you win in the upcoming competition. Claiming victory solely due to luck will only work up to a certain level. Besides, no matter how high your luck is, I can't believe that a low success rate magic will always work out," Obergeine remarked, dispelling any illusions I had.

Well, it's not something easily believed in, to begin with. I don't fully understand my own capabilities either.

"It would be troublesome if you made a mistake at a critical moment. So, this time, just watching should be enough for you. Also..."

Unexpectedly, Obergeine leaned closer to my ear and whispered in a low voice.

“As a member of the Jullienne family, I hesitate to approach Maron-sama, so I advise you, a mere commoner, not to bother her...!”

“...”

...Hmm.

I seem to be getting better at reading between the lines due to the various angers I’ve incurred from others. In other words, Obergeine seems to have favorable feelings towards Maron, a classmate in the same class, and doesn’t like that I’m on good terms with her.

Come to think of it, Obergeine often gazes at Maron with dreamy eyes when we’re in the classroom...

“For someone from the Jullienne family like me, it would be best if a lowly commoner like you didn’t act so familiar. I suggest you realize that your vulgar presence alone tarnishes her dignity,” Obergeine continued, and Asperge fervently nodded in agreement.

I couldn’t help but release a deep sigh inwardly upon sensing such intense hostility from both of them. Such incredible animosity. Just because I get along with Maron, I receive such intense glares.

If I were to forcibly ignite a sense of rivalry and push back, it could affect the competition. For now, it seems I have no choice but to observe.

“Now, we will begin the Spirit Capture: Ghost Snatch in the training grounds!”

Upon that command, the participants took their positions.

The Spirit Capture: Ghost Snatch was a competition in which all 21 classes participated simultaneously. Three participants from each class, making a total of 63 competitors, would vie against each other within the venue.

It was bound to be an intense battle, but due to the warning from my teammates, I stayed slightly behind.

“Get ready at your positions... On your mark... Start!”

Immediately, shimmering lights akin to fireflies appeared throughout the venue.

Those floating entities were Lumiere, the targets of the Spirit Capture: Ghost Snatch.

The participants dashed forth energetically, aiming to capture these Lumiere.

“All 63 aspiring magicians reach out their hands toward the Lumiere, as if trying to grasp the future light! However, the Lumiere also evades the students by using their special abilities!”

The red Lumiere possessed high-speed movement ability.

The blue Lumiere had the power to create illusions.

The green Lumiere could teleport instantaneously.

And so on, each color possessed various abilities, mockingly flitting around the venue, eluding our pursuit.

While everyone desperately chased after them, I started by using body enhancement magic and protection magic to pursue Lumiere.

Despite being told to just watch, I couldn't simply do nothing.

“Here we go! Take this!”

As soon as I touched Lumiere, it disappeared and reappeared somewhere else.

Obergeine and Asperge were also capturing Lumiere with fervor, not just paying lip service. They were doing it with as much energy as I was.

Indeed, it seemed my assistance was not needed.

If things continued to go well, I could aim for the top score...

“A ‘black Lumiere’ has appeared within the venue! Everyone, it’s a great opportunity!”

“——!”

The black Lumiere.

It had an extraordinary point value when captured compared to other Lumiere. However, it possessed the most troublesome ability among all Lumiere: the power to turn invisible. Capturing it was no easy task.

Everyone began searching desperately for the black light.

Then, in the center of the training grounds, they found their target.

Everyone rushed forward, and Obergeine and Asperge were not left behind as they began to run.

But...

“Triple Slipping Successors’ Chain!”

At that moment, the composed third-year students skillfully intervened, taking advantage of the opening.

Chapter 64

Equal Relationship

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Oops! The skilled third-year students took advantage of the appearance of the Black Light Spirit Lumiere and exploited the weaknesses of the underclassmen!”

The underclassmen, eager to be the first to attack the Black Light Spirit Lumiere, fell victim to the third-year students’

magic, which slowed them down.

Immediately after, the third-year students engaged in a fierce battle, with Class 3-D taking a slight lead and showing new tactics.

“Now, Class 3-D has perfectly surrounded the Black Light Spirit Lumiere using barrier magic! With this, they can easily capture the ethereal Lumiere that can turn invisible!”

As the commentary described, the students from Class 3-D skillfully captured the Black Light Spirit Lumiere within the confines of their barrier magic.

Impressed by their efficiency, I couldn’t help but express my admiration.

While everyone’s attention was focused on the Black Light Spirit Lumiere, they used debilitating magic to hinder other classes.

They continued to enclose the Black Light Spirit Lumiere with successive barrier magic, ensuring its capture.

Even though the Black Light Spirit Lumiere had the ability to turn

invisible, within the confined space, it could be easily captured using detection magic and physical enhancement magic.

It was the result of meticulous training in teamwork and rigorous practice with their classmates.

“Damn it! We’ve been defeated!”

“We were too focused on the Black Light Spirit Lumiere!”

The affected students, struggling with their heavy legs, began chasing after other Light Spirits.

However, the previous blow had taken a toll, and they were unable to capture the Light Spirits as they had hoped.

Obergeine and Asperge, classmates from Class 1-A, also frowned in frustration.

“Argh, this wasn’t supposed to happen!”

“Ugh...!”

Nevertheless, they continued to desperately pursue the Light Spirits and managed to earn points little by little.

But...

“Once again, the Black Light Spirit Lumiere has appeared! And this time, there are three of them at once!”

The subsequent appearance of the black-colored Light Spirits was also quickly harvested by the third-year students.

One student drove away the others with hindering magic, another

enclosed the Black Light Spirit Lumiere with barrier magic, and the third captured the target within.

Despite my teammates being weakened, the difference in coordination skills overwhelmed them, and they pulled ahead in points.

“It seems that the experience of the upperclassmen is unbeatable! The third-year students are capturing the Black Light Spirit Lumiere with tremendous speed! The underclassmen are struggling to catch up!”

Indeed, this situation was not good.

The points from the black-colored Light Spirit Lumiere were significantly higher, creating a considerable gap between us.

“The die has been cast—Divine guidance—If you blame anything, blame your own fate—Mischievous Fate, Fortuna!”

Though I tried to fight back using body enhancement magic and restraining magic, the defense of the third-year students was too strong, and I couldn’t catch them.

Besides, even if I managed to stop the third-year students’ movements, this competition required capturing the Light Spirit Lumiere and earning points. As someone who couldn’t use detection magic, it was difficult for me to capture the black-colored Light Spirit Lumiere and close the gap.

...Well, I don’t have just one trick up my sleeve, though.

“The remaining time is less than enough! Will there be a class that can make a comeback from here?”

Hearing that voice, I unintentionally bit my lip.

Shortly after, although I wasn’t particularly enthusiastic about it, I approached Obergeine and Asperge, who were chasing the Light

Spirits, and spoke up.

“Hey...?”

“....?”

“Let’s join forces too.”

“Huh?”

Obergeine frowned, looking displeased.

Not only was she frustrated by the point difference with other classes, but now she seemed bothered by me approaching her.

“What kind of joke is a commoner like you making...? I clearly said that this competition was enough with just me and Asperge! You should stay quiet in the back...”

“But, it clearly is not going well for you, is it?”

“Ugh...!”

Perhaps hitting the nail on the head, Obergeine clenched her hands and fell silent.

However, after clearing her throat and regaining composure, she sought agreement from Asperge, who was on alert.

“W-We were planning to turn things around from now on! There’s still plenty of time left, so there’s no need to panic...!”

R-Right, Asperge?”

“...!? ...! ...!”

Asperge, taken aback by being suddenly addressed, seemed perplexed for a moment but quickly nodded in agreement.

Afterward, while capturing a nearby Light Spirit, Obergeine regained her momentum and spoke to me.

“You, as a commoner, haven’t done anything worthy! So, don’t act all high and mighty!”

“I-I’m not trying to act high and mighty...”

Frustration and impatience heavily tinted Obergeine’s expression.

It seemed she genuinely intended to win the competition with just Asperge and herself.

“I must win this competition, dedicate the victory to Maron-sama...! If I can perform well here, I will finally achieve an equal relationship with Maron-sama as a representative...!” She declared An equal relationship...

It seemed that Obergeine had some kind of goal in mind when participating in the competition.

While fending off the interference magic from other students, she confided her thoughts.

“I have no talent, no achievements, and no popularity. With all that, I can’t simply talk to Maron-sama so casually! And on top of that, it’s infuriating to see you, who doesn’t even have a family emblem, talking to her like it’s nothing!”

Like needles, sharp glances pierced through her glasses towards me.

She wanted to have a conversation with someone as amazing as Maron-sama on equal terms, and she was determined to shine in the Starlight Festival for that purpose.

Though our goals were different, she was also one of the students with a passionate commitment to the Starlight Festival.

“..... It’s true that you may not have any talent, achievements, or popularity. But still, my desire to win in the Starlight Festival is exactly the same as yours, Obergeine.”

“No, you’re wrong...! Don’t equate my feelings with yours...! My aspirations are not so trivial...”

“It’s the same. Because I’m also fighting for Maron-san.”

“Huh...?”

Taken aback by the unexpected confession, Obergeine widened her eyes and lost their words.

Chapter 65

Becoming the Weather Tomorrow

/ Level 999 / By IX

Obergeine, to confirm that she didn't mishear, asks in a serious tone, "What do you mean by fighting for Maron-sama?"

"Sorry, I can't go into details. But I truly want to advance in this Starry blossom Festival for Maron-san's sake," I reply.

If things continue like this, Maron-san will be transferred to a special class under her mother's orders. In order to change that future, we must win the Starry blossom Festival in this class. Though our motivations may differ slightly, our goal remains the same.

"That's why I'm begging you. Please lend us your power for that purpose. It seems almost impossible for me to turn the tables on my own," I plead.

"...!?"

In the end, I bow deeply to make my plea. Obergeine, taken aback, inhales sharply and steps back. Immediately, a wavering presence emanates from her, indicating her hesitation. She probably didn't expect me to bow my head like this. As Asperge handles interfering magic spells by my side, she furrows her brow with concern, seemingly affected by Obergeine's hesitation. Eventually, Obergeine looks at me with a determined expression.

"...Do you have any plan?" he asks.

"There is only one way to turn the tables. For that, I would like to ask both of you to 'restrain' the people from the other classes, rather than chasing after the Light Spirit Lumiere," I explain.

“Restrain...?” she questions.

Why just restraining at this point? That doubt is conveyed solely through her gaze. In the Ghost Snatch competition, points cannot be gained without capturing the Light Spirit Lumiere. Even if we focus on restraining the people from other classes, there’s no way we can achieve a comeback.

Nevertheless, I persist in my earnest request. “I’m not asking you to restrain everyone. If you could just restrain the troublesome third-year students, I’ll manage the rest.”

“Do you mean to say that now, at this late stage, what would be the meaning of doing such a thing...?” Obergeine is perplexed, her gaze shifting.

However, as she watches the other participants around us one by one successfully capturing the Light Spirit Lumiere, Obergeine scratches her black hair and says to Asperge, “Asperge! Please take care of ‘that!’”

“...!?” Asperge turns towards me and hastily asks, “Magic doesn’t work on you anymore, right!?”

“Huh? Y-Yeah. I’m in a state where harmful magic is completely nullified...” I respond.

It seems that Obergeine has already heard about Aegis Fride’s effect of nullifying magic, as she confirms it once again.

Obergeine then gives a meaningful look to Asperge. In response, Asperge nods and begins to chant a spell while extending her hand towards Obergeine.

“【Ear-Piercing Scream——Savior of the Board——Carve a Path of Hope】——【Equal Bestowal Egalite Amour】!”

In an instant, a green light surges through Obergeine’s body. This

magic... “Hmm? It seems one of the first-year students has used an unusual magic. That would be... ‘Universalization Magic,’ right?”

Universalization Magic—【Equal Bestowal Egalite Amour】—can expand the range of effect for enchantment and healing magic. Normally, enchantment and healing magic can only be applied to one person at a time. However, when under the effect of this magic, their effects can be dispersed to the surrounding area.

Now, with Obergeine under the effect of 【Equal Bestowal Egalite Amour】 , if I cast strengthening and healing magic on her, the effects will also be reflected on the people around her. That’s what it means. While it seems like a versatile magic with a lot of practicality, the consumption of magical power for 【Equal Bestowal Egalite Amour】 itself is quite intense, so very few people prefer to use it. In fact, I’ve heard that even an average magician cannot activate it.

Asperge, who handles it so calmly, seems to have a considerably larger amount of magical power than most people. But what exactly does she plan to do with Universalization Magic?

“【Mocking Victor——Chains of Curse——Inflict a Temporary Calamity on that Individual】——【Stumbling of the Successful Slip Chain】!”

Then, unbelievably, Obergeine infuses weakening magic into “her own body.”

In an instant, transparent chains wrap around Obergeine’s legs.

Simultaneously, as if mirrored, slow chains wrap around the legs of the surrounding students.

“Guah! My legs...!”

“Damn it! I’ve been affected too!”

“What?! She cast weakening magic on herself and universalized its effect! All the participants are suffering from the weakening magic!”

Normally, universalization magic is used to expand the beneficial effects of spells, but Obergeine, in an unexpected move, has universalized the weakening magic, causing the students around her to be weakened. In order to achieve that, she had to cast weakening magic on herself as well, so Obergeine is also affected by the slow effect, grimacing in response.

However, thanks to the effect of Aegis Friede, I nullified the effect of “Stumbling of the Successful Slip Chain.”

“I see,” I finally understand, albeit belatedly.

Universalizing weakening magic at the cost of sacrificing oneself.

But because I’m using nullification magic, I will be excluded from the effect.

Thanks to Obergeine and Asperge, this place has just become a stage where only I can move freely... a promised battleground.

“Is this enough for you? Sachi Marmulard!”

“Yeah, leave the rest to me...!”

Obergeine and Asperge, who stubbornly refused to cooperate, have finally let their guard down slightly and lent me their hands.

I can’t afford to miss this opportunity!

I move my lips carefully, ensuring there are no mistakes, and begin chanting.

“【Detestable Overcast Sky——Ruler of the Skies——Distort the

Unhappy Sky】.”

Then, I raise my right hand high towards the ceiling of the training ground.

This is the one move left to us, the magic that will turn the tide...

“【Selfish Weather Selection Ciel】!”

In an instant, a wave of pale blue light spreads around me.

Perhaps due to witnessing an unfamiliar magic, Obergeine shrinks back slightly, appearing somewhat frightened. In this uncertain situation, she watches me with bated breath.

But...

“....Huh?”

After waiting for about five seconds, nothing in particular happens around me.

Only a silent stillness flows between Obergeine and me.

“What...? Huh...? N-Nothing has happened at all...!”

Obergeine is bewildered, a cold sweat forming on her forehead.

Then, her face pales, and in a panic, she quickly approaches me.

“C-Could it be, you failed with probability magic...!?”

At that moment...

“Hey!”

“The Light Spirits Lumiere are behaving strangely!”

The surrounding participants begin to notice the anomaly. Obergeine also realizes it belatedly and looks around in astonishment. The Light Spirits Lumiere floating in the venue appear visibly unsteady and unreliable. Their special abilities don't work properly, and some of them even descend to the ground and fall asleep. As the majority of people in the venue wear puzzled expressions, a broadcast plays to answer their questions.

“Dear participants gathered in the training ground! We have an unexpected announcement! Astonishingly, outside the venue...”

The amplified announcement echoes through the training ground.

“Snow... has started to fall!!!”

“What!?”

“Huh! It's true! It's really snowing!”

“The commotion on the field is getting wild!”

Hearing the commotion, I secretly loosen up my cheeks. This is the true effect of the magic I used, “Selfish Weather Selection Ciel.” It is a magic that can randomly change the weather with a probability of one in a hundred thousand.

Success or failure depends on luck, as well as the kind of weather it changes to. It's a probability magic that seems quite useless in terms of practicality. However, with my luck value of 999...

I can manipulate the weather as I please, turning it into a “Weather Manipulation Magic.”

“Snow... I see, that’s why the Light Spirits Lumiere...”

It seems Obergeine has also realized my intention. While the Light Spirits Lumiere are akin to masses of light, they are still a type of magical beast. And one of the characteristics of the Light Spirits Lumiere as magical beasts is that their condition varies depending on the weather. Clear weather keeps them in good shape, while cloudy weather has no particular effect, and rainy weather puts them in a slump. And the weather they are least suited to is... “snow.”

With the change to unfavorable snowy weather, the Light Spirits Lumiere in the venue begin to weaken significantly.

Weakening magic has no effect on Light Spirits Lumiere, which lack physical form. However, now even the black Light Spirits Lumiere can’t use their transparency ability due to the adverse effects, allowing me to capture them.

“The Light Spirits Lumiere are weakening! It’s a chance to catch them!”

“But my legs are too heavy to move!”

I had a hidden means to weaken the Light Spirits Lumiere. However, with this method, there is a risk of other class students taking points as well. That’s why I wanted Obergeine and Asperge to at least restrain the troublesome third-year students. But I never expected to create a situation where only I can move freely.

“Well then, shall we begin?”

I kick off the ground and transform into a gust of wind. Swiftly, I race through the weakened participants, touching one after another of the feeble Light Spirits Lumiere floating around.

Ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty...

The Light Spirits Lumiere that I touch transform into particles of light,

leaving behind the traces of their movements.

“It’s an impressive advance! The first-year student who luckily escaped the weakening magic is monopolizing the weakened Light Spirits Lumiere one after another!”

After being excessively targeted by the third-year students, I now take the opportunity to claim a large number of Light Spirits Lumiere for myself as a form of payback. No one can obstruct me.

“Kuh... Damn it!”

In the end, when one of the third-year students reached out, a weakened black Light Spirits Lumiere was there, but I swiftly snatched it away from the side. And with that, the competition came to an end.

“The Ghost Snatch Spirit Capture competition has concluded!!! The first-year Class A has achieved a dramatic comeback victory! It is a miraculous and unexpected triumph where even the weather was on their side!”

As soon as the signal for the end sounded, the participants’ weakening effects were lifted, and each of them weakly placed their hands on the ground. Although they finally regained their freedom to move, they were frozen in shock due to the sudden reversal. The audience, too, couldn’t fully comprehend what had happened, and only scattered cheers and applause were heard.

Based on the words of the announcer, it seems that the sudden snowfall is considered an abnormal weather phenomenon. No one realizes it was my magic.

“Why... Why did we lose?”

“Seriously, what are the chances of snow falling at such a timing?”

“And why was that silver-haired girl the only one able to move?”

Well, we won, so it doesn't matter. While the participants from the other classes express their frustration, Obergeine and Asperge come over to me. They seem surprised and start talking to me.

"The snow outside... Could it be... you?"

"Y-Yes, it was me, using probability magic casually."

"..."

They open and close their mouths, perplexed. Well, it's understandable since they've never heard of weather manipulation magic before.

"So, probability magic can do something like that?"

"But well, this is a magic where the success rate is one in a hundred thousand, so even if others use it, nothing would happen."

I explain with a forced smile. It seems Obergeine doesn't have a particularly positive impression of probability magic, so I'm worried about what she thinks. However, without mentioning it, she quietly mutters.

"I... I never thought I would be saved by you. Thank you."

"I-It's fine, really. I did it because I wanted to win too. And if it weren't for your help, we wouldn't have won, so thank you too."

I didn't expect to be shown gratitude, so I'm taken aback. Does this mean she acknowledges my abilities to some extent?

Then Obergeine, still seeming dissatisfied with the outcome of the competition, continues with a clouded expression.

“...I have realized through this experience that I am still an inexperienced person. It seems that becoming an equal to Maron-sama is a long way off. To have an equal conversation with her, I must strive harder from now on.”

“...”

As I observe Obergeine biting her lip in frustration, I decide to express what I have been thinking for a while.

“Hey, why don’t you just talk to her normally?”

“Huh...?”

“I mean, you don’t necessarily have to become as outstanding as Maron-san to have an equal conversation, right?”

Maron-san isn’t the kind of person who judges others based on their abilities, and she treats me equally because we’re classmates...”

“...”

Obergeine’s eyes widen, as if a revelation has struck her, and she remains dumbfounded. It seems the idea of simply talking to Maron-san never occurred to her.

“Admittedly, Maron-san is incredibly talented, so I understand why you’re afraid of establishing an equal relationship.

But more than that, she is an extremely kind person, so I think you can quickly become equals... friends.”

“F... Friends?”

“Yeah, so why don’t you try talking to her normally as an experiment?”

When I propose this again, Obergeine is surprised and stunned. Asperge gently tugs at the hem of her clothes, seemingly agreeing with my suggestion and nodding to Obergeine.

Eventually, Obergeine snaps back to her senses and abruptly turns away.

“Don’t say things that make it sound like I understand them better than anyone else. Is that what you want to imply?”

“N-No, that wasn’t my intention...”

“..... Well, I’ll take your suggestion as a reference, at least.”

...Well, with that said, despite everything that happened, we managed to secure first place in the Ghost Snatch Spirit Capture competition and earn a significant number of points.

Later on, I use “Selfish Weather Selection Ciel” once again to restore the weather to clear skies. The changing weather causes some confusion in the academy, but the competition proceeds smoothly, and we manage to complete the second day.

At that point, Class 1-A was incredibly... in first place among the twenty-one classes.

Chapter 66

Whispers of the Devil

[1 Comment](#) / [Level 999](#) / By [IX](#)

After the second day of the competition, the students were enjoying their free time in various ways.

Some students gathered in their classes for meetings to prepare for the third day, while others returned to their dorm rooms early to rest. There were also those who dedicated themselves to activities in research clubs and committees even during this time.

Among them, Maiss Gracier had just finished a brief meeting in the classroom and was heading towards his dorm room.

He hurriedly walked down the street, as if expressing his inner anxiety.

(Damn it...! Damn it...!)

By the end of the second day, Class 2C ranked third out of twenty-one classes in the overall competition.

Class 3D took the second place. It was a class where excellent students, led by the Student Council President Crossgry, had gathered.

Since the score difference wasn't significant, it seemed easy to turn the tables.

However, there was an overwhelmingly large gap between them and Class 1A, which held the first place.

(At this rate...!)

Even if they managed to secure top positions in all the events on the

third day, it was uncertain whether they could reach the top spot. Unless they monopolized the first place and Class 1A experienced a significant setback, surpassing them would be impossible.

The attention of the audience was already focused on Class 1A, especially on Maron Melange.

It had become quite difficult to attract the crowd's attention towards them at this point.

(I absolutely have to make a name for myself at this Starry blossom Festival!) In Maiss's mind, he recalled the image of his father, who was troubled.

Sudden poor harvest within the territory.

Frequent attacks by demonic beasts.

Furthermore, they were hit by natural disasters.

As a result of these "misfortunes" overlapping, the Gracier family was burdened with a large amount of debt.

If the business slump continued, they would have no choice but to relinquish their position as a duke's family and the word "ruin" inevitably flashed through Maiss's mind.

Due to these circumstances, her father's health deteriorated, and now Maiss alone became the last hope for the Gracier family.

(I must not fall into ruin! I will definitely rebuild the Gracier family!) For that purpose, it was necessary to win the Starry blossom Festival and make the name of Maiss Gracier known in the world of magicians. If he could gain recognition in the magician community at this festival, he would be given important military duties and have the opportunity to achieve military merits.

And if he could achieve impressive results, he would receive a reward from the king.

A reward far more valuable than research funding for a national magician.

If that could be accomplished, it wouldn't be difficult to rebuild the Gracier family.

However, Maiss never expected that his plans would be disrupted by mere first-year students.

Not only that, there was one "concern" floating in the corner of Maiss's mind.

(But still, is that really... "Sachi"?)

Sachi Marmulard, a member of Class 1A.

With some free time available, Maiss went to observe the Ghost Snatch spirit capture event that was taking place at the training ground.

During that time, he witnessed the overwhelming performance of a student named Sachi, leaving the audience speechless.

He had already heard from the students of the school's public relations department that there were commoners among the first-year students, and one of them defeated a son of a prestigious family in a mock battle.

At first, he brushed it off, thinking it must be a different person with the same name...

(But... I think they look alike.)

If Sachi, who was expelled from her home ten years ago was still alive, wouldn't she have a similar appearance?

The resemblance was enough to make Maiss believe that.

Since they hadn't seen each other for a long time, and Sachi was expelled from the family when she was young, Maiss's memories were honestly vague.

Nevertheless, the moment he saw that student's face, something clicked in his mind.

That person is most likely the real Sachi.

(Why is she here...? She shouldn't be able to enroll in a magic academy.) If that person is Sachi Gracier, then it's clearly strange for her to be here at this academy.

Moreover, her remarkable performance in the Ghost Snatch spirit capture event.

She possessed a power that couldn't possibly belong to a dropout with a magic power level of 1.

It is said that the nature of magical essence doesn't change after birth, so it's unlikely that Sachi's magic power level has fluctuated.

And yet, she is actively participating as a student in this academy. Could it be that she obtained some other power?

"Hey! Maiss-kun!"

"Hmm?"

As Maiss walked alone on the path to the student dormitory outside the academy, he suddenly heard a woman's voice from behind. When

he turned around, it was a female student from the school's public relations department who often approached him for interviews.

"I'm glad I caught up with you! It's unlike you, Maiss-kun, to forget after asking me to research something."

"Come to think of it, that's right."

After the events of today's competition, before the class meeting, he approached the girl and asked for research. In return, Maiss had also asked her to investigate something.

The main topic was Sachi Malmurard, whom he had been thinking about just now.

"I've looked into it, that person from Class 1A, Sachi. She's an uncommon commoner in this academy and had a mock battle with the son of the Sifonard family shortly after enrolling... Oh, but you already knew that, right?"

"Yeah."

"As for other information, Sachi Malmurard has a magic power level of 1, but she has been fighting through exams and mock battles using mysterious magic. So, I did some research, and it seems the magic she uses is a type called

'Probability Magic,' which was discovered a long time ago."

Probability Magic...?

Maiss furrowed her brow at the unfamiliar magic.

"Well, to put it simply, it's a magic that depends on luck to succeed or not. And it's an extremely low-probability magic that's practically useless. That's why it's completely unknown. But she's been earning quite a high score using it at the Starry blossom Festival. I don't know how she manages to control a luck-based magic, though."

“...”

A magic that depends on luck to succeed or not.

Maiss had never heard of such a thing.

However, he had a faint idea about the reason why Sachi was able to master it.

(Luck value...)

The magical essence residing within Sachi's body was quite small, resulting in a magic power level of 1. However, it was said to have an extraordinary brilliance, with a value reaching the limit of 999.

If you combine that “luck value of 999” with the obscure “Probability Magic,” it could potentially become practical magic. Even if she had managed to overcome the entrance exams and mock battles at the academy, it wouldn't be surprising.

“Well, for now, this should be enough. If I had more time, I could investigate further, but should I continue...?”

“No, it's fine. That's sufficient.”

Afterwards, the girl from the public relations department hurriedly ran back to the academy, mentioning that there was someone else she wanted to interview. If Maiss had entrusted her with further investigation on Sachi, he might have been able to learn more detailed information about her background and personal details. He might have even confirmed whether she was truly his younger sister.

However, to be honest, whether Sachi was his real sister or not didn't matter. Right now, all that mattered was whether she posed a threat at the Starry blossom Festival.

Hearing that she had earned a significant score in the training ground event, Maiss had requested the research just to be sure.

(But the one I should be wary of is Maron Melange.)

In the end, it seemed that Maron, as the representative, posed the greatest obstacle. While Sachi's power was troublesome, relying on luck-based magic was unreliable compared to Maron's stability.

There was no need to be overly concerned. After all, she was just a magic failure, with an abnormally high luck value, who had been declared a dropout as a magician.

(Luck value, huh...)

Suddenly, a premonition crossed Maiss's mind.

Come to think of it, the decline of the Gracier family's business began exactly ten years ago. More specifically, it started after Sachi was expelled from the mansion. After that, disasters began occurring frequently, leading to a significant decline of the Gracier family.

An extraordinary luck value. A series of misfortunes after her expulsion. The fall of the Gracier family.

Could it be...?

(...No, am I overthinking?)

Maiss shook her head, dispelling unnecessary thoughts. Right now, all he should be focusing on is how to overthrow Class 1A on the third day. If he confronted them head-on like on the first and second days, there would likely be no chance of winning.

Unless he somehow neutralized Maron Melange, it would be absolutely impossible to snatch the first place from Class 1A.

(What should I do...? How can I render Maron powerless...)

As he pondered over such matters, he found himself unknowingly arriving at the student dormitory.

For now, he decided to rest his body and calm down before heading to her own room.

And then...

“Hmm...?”

He noticed an unfamiliar handbag hanging from the doorknob of his room. He considered if it belonged to his roommate, but he was still out practicing for tomorrow and hadn't returned yet.

Since he couldn't ask them about it, he decided to at least check the contents.

“What is this...?”

Inside, there was a small vial containing some kind of liquid and a single letter.

The sender was unknown, but it was clear from the writing on the bag that it was intended for Maiss Gracier.

Momentarily bewildered, Maiss opened the letter and examined its contents with suspicion.

And there...

“...?”

The whispers of the devil were written.

Chapter 67

A Parent's Heart

/ Level 999 / By IX

After the second day of the Starry blossom Festival's competitions had concluded, I returned to the dormitory room with Mill.

Our overall score was currently at the top. If things continued smoothly, Class 1A would secure the championship.

With such a situation at hand, everyone in the class was filled with excitement, and we were able to hold the final day's meeting in a great atmosphere.

There was a lot of attention from those around us, and Maron-san's mother surely had a good impression of our class.

Everything seemed to be going well, but as I gazed out of the darkened window, my emotions clouded.

"What's the matter, Sachi-san?" Mill asked, tilting their head, clearly concerned. It seemed that I had worried them.

Shrugging my shoulders as if it was nothing, I tried to dismiss it. "Well, I just thought I saw someone familiar."

"Huh, among the visitors?"

"No, among the students in the academy. It might just be a mistake though."

I said it as if trying to convince myself, but my heart still wouldn't clear up.

It was impossible to dismiss what I saw as a mere mistake. While observing the competitions, I heard a name from the announcer's commentary and the voices around me. And when I searched for that person, they were among the second-year students in Class 2C.

So, it was indeed... "Maiss, my older brother, I wonder..."

It had been ten years since we last met, but the resemblance was striking. The name and face matched so perfectly that it would be unreasonable to consider him as someone else. The age was the same too. That was undoubtedly my true brother, Maiss Gracier.

I never expected to reunite in this way. Come to think of it, this is the prestigious school for training top-notch magicians. It's only natural that someone from the Gracier family, known for producing skilled magicians for generations, would be enrolled here.

"I... I saw her getting angry about being mistreated, smashing the precious vase our father treasures."

The words that triggered my expulsion from the Glacière family.

My cunning older brother, who used me as a scapegoat for his own sake.

I never imagined we would meet again at this academy, so I'm quite shocked.

Just the presence of someone I dislike in my beloved place dampens my spirits.

"Ah..." Well, it doesn't really matter anymore.

There's no connection between me and that person at this point.

Besides, ten years have passed since then, and even if we were to see each other, he probably wouldn't remember.

In the sense of changing my mindset, I turned the topic towards Mill this time and asked, “By the way, Mill, do you have any acquaintances or friends who came to watch the Starry blossom Festival? It’s understandable if your mother’s illness prevented it.”

“Well, no, I don’t have any particular plans like that. Besides, I hardly have any acquaintances or friends,” Mill replied.

“Don’t say something so sad...”

Well, I don’t have any acquaintances either.

And then, because I had just remembered my brother, a certain question naturally came to mind.

“By the way, Mill, are you an only child?”

“Yes. So I don’t have any siblings or brothers and sisters coming to watch. The people in the village take care of my mother. Oh, but there is one person who’s like an older sister...”

At that moment, Mill suddenly stopped speaking, her voice trailing off. I glanced in that direction and it seemed like she had a pained expression on their face.

Confused by her meaningful expression, I was momentarily taken aback. What was Mill about to say?

However, she quickly returned to her previous expression and continued, “Well, lately, there have been many dangerous incidents involving mage rampages, so even if I had acquaintances or siblings, I might have advised them not to come.”

“Yeah, I heard that there are many people who choose not to invite their family and friends due to the current state of the town. It’s unfortunate that they can’t witness your achievements, but it’s more important to keep them safe from harm.”

“Anyway, I’ll make sure to watch your performance, Mill, so give it your all.”

“Thank you, Sachi-san.”

“Well, since I’m like Mil’s ‘big sister’ in a way, it’s only natural for me to take care of my younger sister.”

“...”

As I let out a silly laugh, Mil looked at me with an expression that seemed like she wanted to say something. Apparently, she didn’t appreciate being treated as a little sister without consent and unexpectedly launched a counterattack.

“Who is the one who always tidies up the messy clothes of her roommate?”

“... It’s Mill.”

“And who is the one who mercilessly wakes up her roommate who’s about to oversleep?”

“... It’s Mill-san.”

“And who is the one who cleans the room instead of her roommate who forgot her cleaning duty?”

“... It’s Lady Mill.”

Sorry for getting carried away.

Upon reflection, I’m the one who’s more like a pathetic little sister, huh?

Let me reconsider and hold back.

“Well then, it’s about time we go to sleep. Tomorrow is the final day of the Starry blossom Festival. And, being the ones responsible for stopping the mage rampages, tomorrow is probably going to be the most challenging.”

Upon hearing Mill’s words, I was reminded once again of the mage rampage incidents.

“Come to think of it, even though we accepted the role of stopping the mage rampages from the headmaster, nothing has happened in these two days, right? It’s been completely peaceful.”

“Well, there’s nothing wrong with peace, is there? Thanks to that, we were able to participate in the competitions properly.”

Next, Mill warned me by crossing her index fingers to create a punishment sign.

“Besides, we shouldn’t let our guard down just yet. We still have the final day ahead. It seems that the teachers will be even busier starting tomorrow, so it’s likely that we will be the ones dealing with the rampage incidents in earnest.”

“That’s why tomorrow will probably be the most challenging. I understand that, so don’t worry.”

Once again, I recalled my role in my mind.

If a mage were to go berserk, the headmaster would teleport us to the scene.

Then, just like when we stopped the rampaging mage in the commercial district, we would neutralize them through the use of force.

I have it firmly in my mind, so there's no need to worry.

In preparation for the following day, I began to get ready for bed.

While Mill fixed the bed, I moved to close the curtains.

And then...

“Hm?”

Outside the window.

Towards the closest tree, it seemed like something glimmered for a moment.

Due to the darkness that had already fallen, I couldn't see it clearly, but it looked like something was perched on a branch...

As I tried to focus my eyes, the light quickly vanished into the darkness.

Or rather, it seemed like it flew away. Was it a bird or something?

“What's the matter?”

“Oh, uh, it's nothing.”

Without paying it much attention, I swiftly closed the curtains.

And so, I went to bed early, preparing for the day to come.

Chapter 68

The Final Day

/ Level 999 / By IX

The Next Morning

Finally, it was the last day of the Starry blossom Festival.

The students were filled with enthusiasm, and the path to school was bustling with energy from the morning.

Mil and I were also caught up in that atmosphere, and naturally, we felt a surge of energy throughout our bodies.

Moreover, we were in the Starry Group A, considered the top contenders for the championship, representing Class 1-A.

It was inevitable that we would be more motivated than anyone else.

Among the vibrant path to school, I spotted someone whose spirits seemed down.

A second-year student with messy gray hair and big round glasses.

“Oh, it’s Pita-ja senpai.”

“Yes, what a coincidence to meet on the way to school.”

While our classmates around us were happily chatting, Pita-ja senpai walked, trying not to get in anyone’s way.

It was hard to believe that this was the same senior who always caused a ruckus in the laboratory.

I tapped her back from behind and called out to her.

“Pita-ja senpai!”

“Eek!”

Perhaps because I did that suddenly, Pita-ja senpai let out a cute scream.

Due to that, she drew some attention from the surrounding students.

I thought she would be a little surprised, but I didn’t expect such a big reaction.

With everyone’s eyes on us, Pita-ja senpai blushed and turned towards us.

“W-What? Sachiko and Mil, huh? Don’t startle me like that.”

“W-Well, we didn’t expect to surprise you this much...”

“I don’t usually get called out on the way to school, so I just... made that kind of voice.”

I felt sorry for what I had done.

Anyway, soon the attention shifted away, and she let out a sigh of relief.

Then, she shrunk herself again, making sure not to be a hindrance to everyone.

I wonder if she’s surprisingly quiet outside the laboratory?

“By the way, I don’t think I’ve seen you at all during this Starry blossom Festival, Pita-ja senpai. Where have you been?”

Since we didn’t have any chances to participate in the same event, I really hadn’t seen her even once.

But normally, I think it wouldn’t be strange to pass each other in the cheering section or somewhere in the academy.

“W-Well, as soon as the events ended, I went straight to the laboratory. I spend much more time researching magical tools in the lab than being at the competition venue.”

“...Somehow, that sounds like Pita-ja senpai.”

It seemed that researching magical tools was more important to her than the Starry blossom Festival.

I thought it was very characteristic of the Pita-ja senpai we knew...

“By any chance, Pita-ja senpai, are you... a loner?”

“Ack!”

Unexpectedly, Pita-ja senpai contorted her body in response to the unintended remark I had made. It seemed that the damage was greater than I had anticipated. Judging by her lack of enthusiasm towards the Starry blossom Festival and the current atmosphere on the path to school, I had a hunch...

“I-I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to blurt that out...”

“I-It’s fine, really. After all, I’m known as the introverted, gloomy, socially awkward loner who’s obsessed with magical tool research. My roommates in the dormitory find me creepy, so I always end up sleeping in my friend’s room. Besides, I don’t need friends for magical tool research, so being a loner is fine for me.”

“...”

I genuinely apologize. It seems like my words have deeply wounded her.

Feeling sorry, I tried to support Pita-ja senpai by bringing up a topic with Mil. However, it backfired.

“I-It’s okay, Pita-ja senpai! We’re together now, so you’re not alone at all! Right, Mil?”

“Y-Yes. That’s right. There’s no need to find someone close among your classmates. Even if they say, ‘Don’t talk to your underclassmen too much,’ it’s not something to worry about.”

“Guh!”

Mil’s words seemed to be the final blow.

“Forbidden to talk to underclassmen” is the rule, right?

While unable to make friends with classmates, she could exert authority over younger students.

Because of that, I’ve heard that there are loners who only socialize with their underclassmen.

On the final day of the Starry blossom Festival, Pita-ja senpai, who had already suffered significant damage even before the competitions began, continued down the path to school with unsteady steps.

At that moment, she suddenly looked at us and spoke.

“By the way, your Class 1-A seems to be far ahead, right? Do your best and win the championship.”

“Don’t you cheer for your own class?”

“You guys are the closest friends I have in this academy. It’s only natural for me to cheer for you.”

“But if you do that, won’t your class go unnoticed, and won’t you lose the opportunity to be seen by the industry’s magicians? Don’t you want to stand out?”

“I don’t really mind. Besides, what I want to do in the future is research on magical tools. It doesn’t hold much significance for me to become famous as a magician. The Starry blossom Festival competitions prohibit the use of magical tools, so it’s truly a futile event for me.”

Pita-ja senpai’s shoulders drooped even more.

It’s rare to see a student who is so negative about the Starry blossom Festival.

“Isn’t there any event that can focus on magical tools and garner attention? I yearn for a stage where I can showcase my skills in magical tool research, rather than the Starry blossom Festival.”

“Well, this is a facility for training magicians, after all. There are only events where magicians themselves can shine.”

Indeed, unless she goes to a specialized society for magical tool research or something similar, she might not have many opportunities like that.

Well, she has an exceptional passion, so I believe that one day everyone will recognize her skills in magical tool creation and the magical tools she has made.

There might even be a possibility that her abilities could save the

world in an unexpected way.

Having such a trivial conversation, the three of us from the magical tool research club continued walking on the path to school.

Chapter 69

Turning Point

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Alright, everyone, let’s give it our all on the final day!”

After finishing the class meeting, we were finally ready to take on the last day of the competition. As everyone confidently left the classroom, Mill and I decided to follow them, but just before we could...

“Sachi-san, Mil-san.”

“Hmm...? Maron-san?”

We were unexpectedly called out by Maron-san from the side.

“There’s something I’d like to talk to you about.”

Upon hearing that, after our classmates had left the classroom, Mill and I stayed behind while Maron-san joined us. The three of us faced each other in the quiet classroom.

“Since the competition is about to start soon, let me keep it brief.”

As Maron-san began speaking, I tensed up slightly.

“Last night, I had a brief conversation with my mother, who came to visit the Starry Blossom Festival.”

“Y-your mother?”

I recalled the sight of Maron-san’s mother that I had seen in the

special building. She looked young enough to be mistaken for Maron-san's older sister. However, her personality was strict, and the scene where she scolded Maron-san was still fresh in my memory. I wondered what kind of conversation took place between them, anxiously waiting for the continuation of Maron-san's words. Surprisingly, it turned out to be a positive report.

"Yesterday, I talked to my mother and expressed my feelings once again. That I'm against transferring to the Specialized Class and that I want to continue my school life in the current class."

"..."

"My mother didn't seem very pleased, as expected. However, depending on the results of the Starry Blossom Festival, she agreed to reconsider the transfer to the Special Class and changing rooms in the student dormitory."

"Huh? So, that means..."

Did Maron-san's mother acknowledge it to some extent? That she can become a stronger magician even in the current class. That the General Class is not completely futile. If we can go all the way and win, the possibility of changing her mind becomes very high. Maron-san, who conveyed this to me again, had a delighted smile on her face.

"This is surely thanks to everyone's hard work and both of you. Thank you so much."

"N-no, we didn't really do anything. If we've come this far and are getting closer to winning the Starry Blossom Festival, it's all thanks to you, Maron-san."

Of course, we were giving our all in the competition, but Maron-san's achievements as the representative were undoubtedly the greatest. No matter how you look at it, it was her own ability that moved her mother's heart. By leading Class 1-A as the representative and earning her recognition, she accomplished this.

“Well, now that we’ve heard this, we can’t afford to lose today, right?”

Maron-san furrowed her eyebrows slightly, seeming a bit apologetic.

“I didn’t mean to surprise you, but I thought I should let you know.”

“Well, it actually makes me more motivated. Let’s seize the victory in Class 1-A!”

As Mill whispered next to me, she clenched her fist with a reserved enthusiasm. While the tension certainly increased, our determination grew even stronger. We were determined to win on the final day.

However, as if to crush my enthusiasm...

Today, once again, the event I was participating in took place quietly in the training grounds.

“Well, I already knew since yesterday, so it doesn’t really surprise me.”

Since I knew that the event would take place in the training grounds, it didn’t affect me much. Moreover, there was one clear difference between the first and second days.

“Hey, Sachi...san?”

“Hmm...?”

The person who called out to me before the competition was my classmate, Nave Rediction. She had vibrant, reddish long hair tied up high, giving her a rather flashy impression. Behind her was Epinal Farine, who often accompanied Nave and had intense blue wavy hair, also styled in a striking manner. Both of them stood out in the class, and many people found them difficult to approach. I was one of those people, and I was genuinely nervous about partnering with them in

this competition.

Both of them didn't seem particularly enthusiastic about the Starry Blossom Festival either.

And then...

"Sachi-san, you're pretty strong, right? Would you consider being the 'Invader' for this event, 'Territory Invasion: Personal Space'?" (T/N: These event names keep getting funnier)

"Huh? Me...?"

The event we were participating in this time was called 'Territory Invasion: Personal Space.' It was a three-member competition where each class defended their assigned 'Territory' while invading another class's territory to earn points.

Therefore, the participants were divided into 'Defenders' who protected their class's territory and 'Invaders' who infiltrated other class territories.

As a strategy, we could have all three members become 'Invaders' by having zero 'Defenders,' but the competition was designed to heavily favor the 'Defenders.' Outside the territory, powerful gravity generated by the teachers' magic hindered the movement of the 'Invaders' attempting to infiltrate other class territories. When outside the territory, the

'Invaders' would be subjected to an all-out attack from members of other classes, making it easy to immobilize them.

Hence, the norm was to leave one or two 'Defenders,' preferably selecting the most capable ones, and many classes adopted this strategy. I assumed Nave and Epinal knew this, so I was genuinely bewildered when they asked if I could be the 'Invader.'

"Is it okay for me?"

“We didn’t really have any interest in the Starry Blossom Festival...”

“Seeing everyone in our class putting in so much effort, we just... want to win.”

“...”

It was an unexpected line from the usually apathetic duo who would often seem disinterested during classes and exercises.

“So, Sachi-san, you’re considered the strongest. How about you take on the role of the ‘Invader’ and score some points for us?”

“Well, if you don’t want to, it’s fine.”

“N-no, if you’re okay with me, I’d be happy to do it.”

It seemed that it wasn’t just Mill, Maron-san, and I who were getting motivated. Everyone was caught up in the atmosphere of the Starry Blossom Festival, burning with determination.

And...

“Sachi-san, you’re pretty strong.”

Little by little, it seemed that my abilities were being recognized by my classmates, and it made me happy in a way.

With a secretly relaxed smile, I made up my mind to challenge the Territory Invasion: Personal Space as an ‘Invader.’

“Now, we will begin the Territory Invasion: Personal Space in the training grounds!”

Following the commands of the organizers, the event began.

“Take your positions... Ready... Start!”

And thirty minutes later...

“With a record-breaking score of ‘110 points,’ the victors are... Class 1-A!”

The result was a resounding victory. Without any issues, I earned points according to the plan, and the event came to an end.

“What the hell was that commoner?!”

“Why don’t our spells work on her?!”

“Is it true that she can nullify any magic?!”

After the competition, I received resentful glares from students of other classes.

The effects of [Momentary Peace Aegis Fride] and [Foolish Valor Gran Deal] shone brightly in this competition.

Thanks to [Momentary Peace Aegis Fride], all the magic attacks from other students were nullified. Not only that, it also nullified the gravity magic placed outside the territories, allowing me to move freely within the competition area.

And with [Foolish Valor Gran Deal], my physical abilities were heightened to the limit, enabling me to step into various territories and earn points one by one.

Once an invading class’s territory was breached, it couldn’t be invaded again for three minutes, so I needed to target another class’s territory immediately. But with the enhanced physical abilities granted by [Foolish Valor Gran Deal], I effortlessly ran around the competition area.

Due to the gravity magic, teleportation magic didn't work well in the competition area, causing other students to struggle.

With everything that happened, it was only Class 1-A that raked in points and achieved a resounding victory.

"S-Sachi-san, you were amazing!"

"Thanks for earning points in our place. Really, thank you!"

"N-No, it's because you two were defending the territory that I could move freely."

As Nave and Epinal praised me, my face grew hot. It's embarrassing to be praised so directly.

In any case, all of my participating events in the Starry Blossom Festival had come to an end. I gave it my all, and I think the results were quite good. Now, all that's left is to cheer for everyone and pray for a good outcome.

With that thought in mind, the exhaustion of the past three days suddenly hit me, and I let out a deep breath. My body relaxed, and I was considering sitting down on the ground when...

Thud!

As if shaking the entire academy, a heavy impact reverberated through the training grounds.

"...?"

Everyone inside the venue tilted their heads in confusion, and I did the same, looking around.

What was that impact just now? An earthquake, perhaps?

I then noticed that the noise was coming from the grounds, where Maron-san and Mill should be competing together.

Considering the timing, they should still be in the middle of the event.

“What was that sound just now?”

“Who knows? Maybe they’re using some flashy magic on the grounds?”

While listening to Nave and Epinal’s conversation out of the corner of my eye, I furrowed my brows.

The impact and noise seemed much larger than what could be caused by magic. Powerful magic that can cause such an impact is prohibited in the Starry Blossom Festival due to being seen as excessive aggression.

“Hmm...”

The noise from the grounds grew louder. It was an unusual commotion.

No, it wasn’t exactly a commotion. It felt more like a slight disturbance.

Feeling an indescribable uneasiness, I thought about going to check out the grounds for myself when...

“Sachi Malmurard!”

“___?!”

Suddenly, the voice of a young girl resounded in my head.

This voice... is it... the headmistress?

Caught off guard by the suddenness of it, my heart raced, and then I heard something even more surprising.

“That ‘Berserker’ has appeared! Should I teleport you to the scene immediately? Is that okay?”

“Eh?! R-Right now?!”

I inadvertently blurted out, earning puzzled looks from Nave and Epinal. At the same time, the entrance to the training grounds closed with a door, and the voice of the announcer echoed inside.

“To all those gathered in the training grounds, we regret to inform you that an accident has occurred in the main competition area. In order to minimize the damage, we will temporarily close the training grounds. We apologize for the inconvenience and ask for your patience.”

An accident.

Perhaps to avoid causing unnecessary commotion, the announcer deliberately chose those words to address the spectators.

It seems that the “Berserker,” the perpetrator of the previous Mage Rampage incident, has actually appeared.

“I don’t have time to explain in detail. The teachers are already stretched thin with the management of the Starry Blossom Festival. While they are trying to subdue the Berserker, they are facing considerable delays. That’s why I want to borrow your power, the one who has actually stopped the Berserker!”

“...”

Even in the Personal Territory Invasion event, They were constantly deploying large-scale gravity magic. As a result, the teachers’ magical energy was significantly depleted, making it difficult for them to

restrain the Berserker.

However, considering the teachers' abilities, I think they should be able to apprehend the Berserker without any issues.

But is the Berserker really that formidable?

In any case, I listened to the headmistress's proposal and looked down at my own body. The effects of "Momentary Peace Aegis Friede" and "Blind Valor Gran Deal," the magic I used in the competition, were still active. They only nullify harmful magic, so it shouldn't interfere with the headmistress's teleportation magic.

"I'm fine. I can move immediately."

"Apologies for the sudden request. It's likely that you'll engage in combat immediately after the teleportation. Please cooperate with the teachers to subdue the Berserker!"

After swiftly saying so, I heard the headmistress's incantation through the telepathic connection. Soon after, my body was enveloped in a bright light, and I felt a sensation of floating.

My field of vision shimmered like a heat haze, gradually transitioning to a different scene.

Eventually, the teleportation successfully completed, and I arrived at the scene where the Berserker was.

"...Huh?"

There, I witnessed something unbelievable, as if doubting my own eyes.

The place I was teleported to was the center of the main competition grounds.

Damaged facilities were scattered around, and frightened students could be seen huddled on the edges.

In front of me stood the teachers, who were on guard, and there was a single “student” who was injured and lying on the ground.

It was someone I had just talked to in the classroom this morning, an acquaintance, or rather, one of my precious few

“friends.”

Maron Melange, with her soft brown hair and calm face, was lying on the ground, bleeding.

“...”

And the Berserker, who seemed to have caused the commotion, was being surrounded by the teachers.

It was my brother, Maiss Glacier, with bloodshot eyes and breathing heavily.

Chapter 70

Passion

/ Level 999 / By IX

My surroundings were always filled with smiles.

Mulbury-san, who was imprisoned in the Forest of Sinners for a crime she didn't commit.

Mil, who is always followed by misfortune.

I often spend time with unfortunate people like them, but I've never actually witnessed them experiencing great misfortune before.

I used to think that maybe it was because of my luck value of 999.

Because my luck value is high, maybe I'm able to spread good fortune to the people around me.

"Ugh... Guh..."

"..."

Therefore, seeing someone close to me getting hurt like this is a first for me.

Maron-san has numerous cuts on her arms and legs, and she's bleeding heavily from her abdomen.

"Someone, please! Use healing magic on her!"

"We don't have enough mana for that anymore! At this rate..."

Several teachers who are treating Maron's injuries are shouting while looking around.

The consumption of mana for healing magic is significantly higher than other spells.

In addition, it seems that the wounds inflicted on Maron are quite deep, and the teachers who are already exhausted won't be able to fully heal her.

However, the other students who participated in the competition shouldn't have enough mana to spare.

That's why the visiting magicians from outside the club were hurrying to come here.

But before they could reach us, I started to move.

“[Tears on a wet face——A guardian angel watching over, bestow mercy upon this person.]”

As I chanted those words, I approached Maron, who had collapsed, and the teachers looked at me with puzzled expressions.

Perhaps because it was an incantation they had never heard before. The magicians who were about to rush over also had a perplexed look on their faces.

Ignoring their gazes, I reached out my hand to Maron.

“[Caprice de l'ange——Caprice Chœur]”

Instantly, pure white light dwelled in my right hand and enveloped Maron's body with the same white light.

That light quickly healed her wounds.

The numerous cuts on her arms and legs, the serious injury to her abdomen, and the multiple fractures inside her body.

I healed all of them in an instant, achieving “complete recovery.”

“Eh...!? You healed the wounds just now in an instant...”

“What kind of magic was that?”

A healing magic with a one-in-a-hundred-thousand chance of success——[Caprice de l’ange——Caprice Chœur].

A magic that can heal anything except for illnesses.

But it doesn’t restore lost stamina.

That’s why Maron is sleeping quietly, taking gentle breaths.

For now, I was able to save her life, and I felt a deep sense of relief inside.

Next, I turned to the stunned teachers and decided to ask them just to make sure.

“...Who did this?”

Surprisingly, my voice was low and hoarse.

“Eh...? W-Who? It’s that student causing a ruckus over there...”

“Weren’t you there when they suddenly shouted and attacked her during the competition?”

The teachers pointed their fingers at my brother, Maiss, who is currently running wild.

Realizing that it wasn't a misunderstanding, I swallowed my emotions that were about to overflow along with my breath.

Then, I stood up from beside Maron and entrusted her to the teachers as I walked away.

“Please take care of Maron-san for me.”

The destination was the battlefield where the other teachers were fighting.

In the center of the chaotic ground, my brother, Maiss Glacier, was rampaging.

“Maron... Melange...! Colossus...!”

While saying ominous words, Maiss shook his body in a disturbing manner, his sharp gaze fixed on Maron.

And then—

“Ugh... Gaaahhh!!!”

With a roar, he released a gigantic fireball from his right hand.

The enormous size of the fireball caused screams to erupt from the audience, and even the teachers were astonished.

The teachers, who no longer had enough mana to spare, couldn't stop it.

Making that judgment, I rushed forward in front of the teachers,

immediately raising my right hand.

In an instant–

When the fireball touched my hand, it silently “disappeared.”

“What...!?”

“A magic of that magnitude...”

“It vanished in an instant...?”

The astonishment of the teachers was transmitted to me from behind.

My magic-nullifying ability, [Momentary Peace – Aegis Freed], was still in effect.

As a result, the fireball released by Maiss was completely nullified just before it touched my hand.

While keeping a wary eye on Maiss in front of me, I called out to the teachers behind me.

“I’m Sachi, who was sent here by the school principal for support. Leave this to me, and teachers, ensure everyone’s safety.”

“So, you’re one of those...”

“One of the students that Headmaster Ananas mentioned...”

As I explained, Maiss prepared to cast another spell.

This time, it was a powerful lightning strike with a zigzagging trajectory in mid-air.

Amidst the gasps of the surrounding crowd, I swatted it away and nullified it with my right hand.

Then, suddenly, someone “teleported” beside me.

“Sachi-san!”

“Mil...”

Emerging suddenly from an empty space was Mil.

It seemed that she also teleported here with the school principal’s magic.

She was supposed to participate in the competition together with Maron, but when the commotion broke out, she was forced to retreat with the other students.

Afterward, she returned to the ground with the principal’s teleportation magic.

Understanding the situation in an instant, I immediately shouted to Mil.

“Mil, use barrier magic!”

“Y-Yes!”

Just like when we stopped the rampaging individual before, Mil and I sprang into action.

With her [Frozen Land – Niflheim], an ice barrier was erected in the center of the ground, creating a one-on-one situation between me and Maiss.

This way, he couldn't easily escape, and the damage to the surroundings could be mitigated to some extent.

Although I couldn't rely on the cooperation of others, for me, that was actually "convenient."

After all, this was something I had to settle by myself, no matter what.

"Don't get in my way... Sachi!!!"

"..."

Maiss's bloodshot gaze turned toward me.

As I suspected, it seemed that he had noticed me as well.

And from his words, I realized that there was still some semblance of consciousness remaining in him.

Perhaps he had been involved in some kind of incident and ended up rampaging unintentionally.

But now, as we faced each other, it became clear.

Maiss deliberately harmed Maron.

I could feel the malice emanating from my own brother, deep from within his heart, and I clenched my fist silently.

Simultaneously, Maron's warm and gentle voice flashed through my mind, and I bit my lip hard.

"If you're willing, would you accompany me on this request? I would be very happy if you could join me for lunch as well..."

My brother, who caused the incident that led to my expulsion from

our family. It's true that we have such a history...

'From here on, it's our sibling quarrel.'

Above all else, I absolutely cannot forgive him for hurting my friends!

As if signaling the beginning of the war, I initiated the incantation.

Chapter 71

Sibling Quarrel

/ Level 999 / By IX

“[In the Pure Night Sky—Glimmering Stars—Illuminate My Tomorrow]”

I chanted while holding my right hand against my body.

“[Stellar Encounter Solus Etoile]”

Instantly, my body was filled with golden light, which quickly subsided.

A probability magic called “[Stellar Encounter Solus Etoile]” that allows me to activate magic with zero mana consumption once every hundred thousand attempts.

Although I have exceptionally high luck, my mana level is not much different from others.

To avoid running out of mana myself, I decided to use this magic carefully.

As there might be a possibility of a prolonged battle.

“Maron... You nuisance... Sachi too, perish!”

Meanwhile, Maiss clutched his head, swaying his body, and then raised both hands, shouting.

“Ugh... Gaaaaahhh!!!”

Various types of magic were unleashed from Maiss's hands.

Giant fireballs, powerful lightning strikes, sharp gusts of wind, large amounts of water, bomb-like rocks...

All of them rained down upon me, causing a violent impact throughout the grounds.

Amidst the screams and confused commotion in the surroundings, I sighed in exasperation.

“...It's futile.”

No matter what kind of magic he uses, none of it affects me.

No matter how many spells he unleashes, he cannot inflict a single wound on me.

Still, Maiss continued to wildly cast magic as if he had gone mad.

Standing motionless, neutralizing everything he throws at me, I raised an eyebrow with a slight hint of doubt.

Since earlier, he has been using a multitude of magic, but all of them are exceptionally “powerful” beyond measure.

It's a formidable power that far surpasses the magical power value attributed to Mil, who is said to be the top in the academy.

If I recall correctly, the headmaster mentioned that the other rampaging individuals were also exerting power beyond their measured magical power.

Their mana is expanding to its limits, allowing them to use magic beyond their actual capabilities.

These characteristics align with the other rampaging individuals, so it's safe to assume that Maiss is also one of them.

“...”

There was no doubt about that suspicion, but I felt a sense of unease regarding another point.

Maiss hasn't been performing any “chants” at all since earlier.

Without commanding mana through incantations, a person should not be able to use magic.

Yet, he has been continuously casting spells without any sign of chanting.

“Non-Verbal Magic...?”

An advanced technique believed to be wielded only by the Student Council President, Crossgry-san—“Non-Verbal Magic.”

By reciting the incantation silently in one's mind instead of speaking it aloud, one can command mana and activate magic.

If that's the case, it's possible to unleash all kinds of magic at high speed, faster than moving the mouth...

No, that's not it.

Upon closer observation, various types of magic were freely flowing out of my brother Maiss's body.

Fire magic, lightning magic, swift wind magic...

Furthermore, even currently useless “lighting magic” and “healing

magic” were being unintentionally activated.

Those clearly weren’t intentionally cast spells.

Rather than non-verbal magic, it seemed like the mana was disregarding the host’s intentions and randomly unleashing magic.

In other words, is this a mana rampage?

“Gaaahhh!!!”

Maiss showed no signs of calming down, constantly unleashing various spells from his body.

If the mana is rampaging uncontrollably, it would explain the indiscriminate release of unintended magic.

Since the mana of the rampaging individuals is expanding to its limits due to an unknown cause, it could be attributed to its influence.

Regardless, I couldn’t predict what kind of magic he would use, so it seemed best to exercise maximum caution and restrain him.

After confirming that the effect of “[Momentary Peace Aegis Frede]” was still active, I dashed towards Maiss.

And just like when I stopped a rampaging individual before, I began chanting to use the same technique.

“[The die is cast—Divine guidance—If you resent, resent your own fate]”

With my enhanced leg strength from the body strengthening magic “[Foolish Strength of the Fire Scene Grand Deal],” I closed the distance in an instant.

Naturally, he attempted to counter with magic, but it was all nullified by the effect of “[Momentary Peace Aegis Frede].”

As I approached my brother Maiss in a straight line, I slipped into his guard.

To ensure a direct hit with the magic, I reached out my right hand towards his abdomen and activated the spell the moment I made contact.

“[Fate’s Mischief Forl’tuna]!”

Snap! A burst of yellow light erupted from my right hand, flowing through Maiss’s entire body.

Immediately, Maiss fell to the ground, devoid of strength.

A low probability spell, “[Fate’s Mischief Forl’Tuna],” which can restrain the opponent completely regardless of the difference in magical power, successfully activated.

Seemingly, the spell worked, just like when I stopped the previous rampaging individual.

Or so I thought...

“Gaaahhh!!!”

“Huh!?”

Despite supposedly being restrained, various magic still leaked from Maiss’s body.

Pillars of fire rose, fierce winds blew, and electricity surged through the ground...

The mana residing within Maiss's body continued to unleash magic without ceasing its rampage.

"I stopped his movements, so why is he still casting magic...!?"

"How can we suppress this rampage...!?"

Behind an ice barrier, the teachers and magicians showed signs of confusion.

The mana, disregarding the host's intentions, continued its expansion and rampage.

Even when the host's movements were halted, the mana within the body showed no signs of ceasing its rampage.

The magic unleashed from Maiss's body caused impacts in the surroundings, even starting to crack the ice barrier created by Mil.

If left unchecked, the leaked magic could spread throughout the area, potentially causing injuries to those nearby.

We needed to resolve this situation as soon as possible.

"Sa... Chi...! You're getting in the way...!!!"

Maiss, bound by the restraining magic, writhed on the ground and glared at me.

In response to his gaze, magic flew towards me, but I nullified all of it.

"The Starry Blossom Festival... I... will win...! And for that... I must eliminate Maron...!"

A glimpse of Maiss's true feelings escaped from his remaining trace of

self-awareness.

Hearing that, I clenched my back teeth tightly amidst the shower of magic.

I still didn't know why my brother, Maiss, had become one of the rampaging individuals.

I secretly wondered if he was a victim caught up in a serious incident.

But now that it was clearly spoken out, I couldn't deny it anymore.

This man intentionally harmed Maron-san for his own purposes.

Those emotions must have expanded under the influence of his mental breakdown and led to his actions.

“Do not interfere...! You will also... perish!”

“...”

Facing overwhelming malice and hostility, I quietly nurtured my anger and clenched my fist.

The man who caused me to be driven out of my family home.

My cunning brother, who pinned the blame on me to escape punishment, protecting only himself.

I had vaguely understood that since that time, but Maiss Glacier was truly a self-centered and rotten individual to the core.

“...I'll make you understand whose friend you laid your hands on.”

I slowly approached the fallen Maiss.

Nullifying the pouring magic, I closed in on him, and once again, I touched his body and began the incantation.

“[Hollow Afternoon—Sunlight peering through the clouds—Lull the child into slumber]”

The current situation left everyone at a loss as to how to stop Maiss’s rampage.

However, I...

I had only one card up my sleeve to calm this man.

“[Lullaby of Respite—Uruze Siesta]”

After the incantation, a pale blue light surged from my right hand.

In an instant, it flowed through Maiss’s entire body, faintly illuminating him.

And then...

The magic that leaked from Maiss’s body suddenly, without warning, ceased, as if the rain had stopped.

“The... magic... stopped?”

“It stopped...?”

As the magic that overflowed from Maiss’s entire body suddenly ceased, the onlookers were left dumbfounded.

In the brief moment of silence that enveloped the stadium, the ice barrier created by Mil slowly crumbled away.

Soon, the teachers cautiously approached us, their expressions filled with astonishment, as they focused their attention on the fallen Maiss.

“H-How did you...? How did this student’s magic suddenly stop...?”

“Why did this student’s magic come to a sudden halt...?”

It seemed that even among the teachers, no one was familiar with the magic I had just used.

Feeling exasperated by the limited recognition of probability magic, I briefly explained.

“I put his mana to ‘sleep’ and rendered him unable to use magic.”

“Put his mana to sleep?”

“There’s a magic that can put the target’s mana to sleep, disabling their ability to use magic. Since it seemed like his mana was rampaging, I attempted to neutralize it using this method.”

“...”

Their understanding seemed to lag behind upon hearing about putting mana to sleep.

And understandably so, as there was no other magic that could achieve such an effect.

A magic that puts the target’s mana to sleep, thus preventing them from using magic—”[Lullaby of Respite—Uruze Siesta].”

This, too, was a type of probability magic, with a success rate of once in a hundred thousand attempts, making it quite low.

Of course, if it were used by someone with a luck value of 999 like me, it would become a perfect incapacitation magic that could reliably put the opponent's mana to sleep.

Normally, in a combat situation, I would often settle things with the restraining magic "[Fate's Mischief Forl'Tuna]."

However, the circumstances were slightly different this time, so I chose to use this magic instead.

As for why I usually use "[Fate's Mischief Forl'Tuna]...

"This magic is difficult to control its intensity, and I still can't handle it well. It's possible that his mana might sleep for a month, two months, or even more than a year."

"S-So, until then, he won't be able to use magic?"

"Yes."

The first reason I hadn't used it in previous combat situations was that I couldn't control its intensity properly.

Because I couldn't determine the duration to put the target's mana to sleep, there was a possibility of rendering them unable to use magic for several months.

I still vividly remembered the time I tried this magic and accidentally put Mulbury-san's mana to sleep, leaving her unable to use magic for about a month.

"Sa... Chi...! What have you done to me...!"

"..."

Looking down at Maiss writhing on the ground with a cold gaze, I folded my knees and brought my face close.

Whispering heartless words into Maiss's ear, I murmured:

“Now, maybe you'll understand my suffering a little... Maiss, big brother.”

Having been labeled as an incompetent who could hardly use magic, and having tasted suffering, I now incapacitated my brother to inflict upon him the same pain.

Chapter 72

Cancellation

/ Level 999 / By IX

After rendering my brother, Maiss, powerless,

He was restrained and taken to the disciplinary office.

With the troublemaker temporarily expelled from the venue, the audience felt a faint sense of relief.

However, the school remained in a state of chaos, and the surrounding atmosphere conveyed a sense of confusion.

In an effort to calm the audience, the teachers were desperately moving around, and I, too, was being questioned by my homeroom teacher, Mr. Lezan, about the battle with Maiss.

“I see, it was a mana surge. That explains how he was able to cast magic without incantations.”

As someone who actually fought against Maiss, I know the truth behind it all.

Revealing everything, Ms. Lezan scratched her purple hair and frowned.

“Many of the teachers, including myself, were unable to assist due to mana depletion. I’m truly sorry. That’s why I’m really grateful that you stopped him in our place.”

“W-Well, even though I say I stopped him, I did it in quite a forceful manner.”

Personally, I'm not completely satisfied with the outcome of this incident.

"Didn't you use a spell called 'Lullaby of Serene Slumber, Ulus Siesta'? It seems you stopped his rampage by 'lulling his mana to sleep.' Given the circumstances, I think it was an appropriate response."

"I haven't fully mastered that magic yet, so I don't really know how deeply his mana fell asleep. It's not like a poison or curse, so I can't heal it with recovery magic... Maybe I've permanently disabled his ability to use magic."

There's a real possibility that I've completely extinguished his life as a magician.

Perhaps I should have found a different way to stop him.

As I'm filled with regret, a voice suddenly echoes in my mind.

"No, you did well, Sachi Malmuraad."

"Headmaster..."

"If you hadn't done that, we wouldn't have been able to restrain him."

It seems Ms. Lezan can also hear the voice of the headmaster, as she nods in agreement.

Comforted by their words, I finally find some small measure of satisfaction in my actions.

At the very least, I should be grateful that there were no casualties.

"I apologize for leaving everything to you. Since one individual went out of control, we needed to be vigilant for the possibility of other

outbreaks elsewhere. I truly appreciate your efforts, Sachii Malmurad.”

“No, it was part of the agreement from the beginning. By the way, are there any other troublemakers?”

“So far, none.”

That’s a relief.

Since we don’t know the signs or conditions preceding the appearance of troublemakers, it’s an unpredictable situation of not knowing when, where, or who will go berserk.

For now, it’s reassuring that no further damage has occurred.

“However, we must remain cautious. Another troublemaker could appear at any moment. Moreover, due to the fact that we had a troublemaker and a victim among the students, it was decided after discussion to cancel this year’s Starry Blossom Festival.”

“What...?”

The words “Starry Blossom Festival, canceled” whirl around in my head.

The baton that we have all been passing together up until now feels like it has been abruptly knocked out of our hands.

Feeling down by myself, Ms. Lezan nods with a complex expression on her face.

“Well, I think it’s a reasonable decision. The appearance of troublemakers has been a concern for some time, and even the holding of the Starry Blossom Festival itself was in doubt.”

“I-Is that so?”

“Nevertheless, the headmaster, Ananas, made efforts and appealed to the government to allow the Starry Blossom Festival to take place, as we couldn’t deprive the students of their opportunity to shine.”

I had no idea.

Certainly, most of the students were filled with enthusiasm.

Not excluding myself and Mil, we were both quite excited about the Starry Blossom Festival, especially after what happened with Maronsan.

It seems the headmaster went to great lengths to ensure that the Starry Blossom Festival could still be held, so as not to waste the students’ enthusiasm.

“However, due to the unfortunate occurrence of a troublemaker as we feared, the cancellation became inevitable. I apologize to the students who were affected.”

Then, the headmaster continued with a more formal tone.

“That’s why I want to express my gratitude once again to Sachi Malmurad. Thank you for saving the students who were affected.”

“N-No, it was...”

Afterward...

The announcement of the cancellation of the Starry Blossom Festival spread throughout the school.

In response, complaints from the students began to surface... or so I

thought. Surprisingly, it didn't turn into such a situation.

Many of the students who witnessed the commotion firsthand at the sports ground seemed to consider the cancellation of the competitions to be reasonable.

Maiss Glacier's rampage had evidently left a strong impact on the students.

However, naturally, there were also those who felt disappointed. Students who didn't witness the incident and spectators who had come from afar expressed great regret.

In the same manner, the students of Class 1-A were plunged into double sorrow.

It was a bitter feeling of regret, as we had a chance to win, and the shock of our classmate, Maron-san, becoming a victim.

However, since no one could be blamed, there was nothing to channel our pent-up anger towards.

The circumstances behind my brother Maiss becoming a troublemaker had yet to be fully unraveled, so we couldn't simply place blame on him.

In such a profoundly regretful manner, the curtains closed on the Starry Blossom Festival.

However...

My battle was far from over.

Chapter 73

Complete Healing Magic

/ Level 999 / By IX

After the cancellation of the Starflower Festival, the spectators left the academy, and the students were instructed by the teachers to return to the dormitory.

It was announced that the schedule would remain unchanged from the following day, and classes would proceed as usual.

When I heard this from the assigned teachers in each classroom, it meant that we were free to leave for the day.

Although I was concerned about Maron's condition and various other things, I decided to return to the dormitory quietly like everyone else.

However...

"Sachi, can I talk to you for a moment?"

"...?"

As I was about to leave, I was stopped by Professor Lezan, providing an unexpected opportunity to dispel my doubts.

"Pom Puwazon from the infirmary is looking for you."

"The infirmary?"

"Maron Melange is currently resting in the infirmary. She apparently wants to talk to you about treating her injuries."

“Maron...?”

I was just starting to worry about her condition.

Well, I think it's fine since I treated her, but I wanted to check on her just in case.

“Alright, I understand. I'll go right away.”

With that, I decided to head to the infirmary.

I asked my roommate, Mil, to go back first.

Mil also seemed concerned about Maron's condition, but she declined my invitation to come along, saying that it would be inconvenient to crowd the place with too many people.

So, I headed alone towards the infirmary on the second floor of the special building.

Although I've never been there before, it seems that other students frequently use it.

The reason being that students often return covered in wounds from their regular battles with magical beasts.

The infirmary is used to treat those wounds.

“Here it is...”

Arriving at the rumored infirmary, I nervously knocked on the door.

After a short while, I sensed someone approaching from behind the door, and it slowly opened.

By the way, I wonder what kind of teacher is in here? As I absentmindedly pondered, I caught sight of a woman with sharp eyes and intimidating fiery red hair that seemed to be in charge of the back alleys of the town.

“Oh, who the hell are you?”

“Um... uh...”

I unintentionally trembled and stammered.

Her blood-red long hair looked as if it was soaked in fresh blood, tied up in the back.

Her nearly closed eyes exuded an indescribable sense of intimidation, and combined with her inexplicably disgruntled expression, it involuntarily made me shrink back.

I never imagined I would encounter such a scary person when visiting the infirmary.

Why would a frightening delinquent be in a place like this? As I was bewildered, I caught sight of the white coat and short skirt the woman was wearing.

Moreover, she was holding a blackboard in her hand, a look that perfectly matched the image of an infirmary teacher.

Could it be...

“Po-Po... Pom-sensei, is that you?”

“Popopopop, shut up! That’s not my weird name!”

“Eeek!”

Due to my nervousness, I ended up stuttering and greatly angering the woman.

Her way of getting angry was terrifying! Her yelling voice carried weight!

She looked more suited to holding a wooden sword than a blackboard.

“Hmm? If it isn’t Sachi Malmurard?”

“Huh?”

As I trembled with my face covered, the woman stopped her stern expression and tilted her head.

Although I was confused by being called out by name so suddenly, I nodded in response.

“Yes, that’s right. I’m Sachi. Malmurard.”

“Oh, I see, I see! I thought it might be one of those troublemaking kids from the academy who got themselves injured again. I unconsciously took a harsh attitude. Sorry about that, Sachi.”

“...?”

She patted my back with a thud, making me shrink back even more.

Suddenly, she changed her approach to a friendly one, and I didn’t know how to respond.

However, without paying any attention to my agitation, the woman in the white coat continued to speak.

“The students at the academy are really a bunch of troublemakers. My

magical energy isn't infinite, so I wish they would consider that a little. Just because I'm the 'Master of Healing Magic,' they always come to me for everything."

"Well, um..."

She grumbled with a click of her tongue, but there was a faint joy on her face.

It gave me the impression that she was dealing with a troublesome child as a mother would... or perhaps as an older sister dealing with a cheeky younger sibling.

She didn't seem too displeased.

"Oops, my bad, my bad. That's enough irrelevant talk. There's no mistaking that I'm Pom Puwazon. Well then, come inside right away."

"Huh, wait...!"

She took my hand and pulled me into the infirmary.

There was no doubt that this person was Pom-sensei, who called me to the infirmary.

But I didn't expect her to be this scary.

Suddenly, I felt anxious about why I was called here.

In any case, as I entered the infirmary, I felt a fresh sense of novelty at the sight before me.

The infirmary was quite spacious.

It was about the same size as a treatment room, with four beds on each side wall.

Among them, there was one student sleeping on the bed at the far end of the right wall.

“Maron-san...”

It seemed that she hadn’t fully recovered her strength yet, quietly breathing in her sleep.

When Pom-sensei brought me in front of Maron-san, she started talking.

“I brought you here to confirm. You’re the one who treated this girl, right?”

“Yes, but...”

“I heard various things from the people who saw you treating her. But there’s something I still can’t quite accept. That’s why I wanted to hear it directly from you, Sachi.”

Something she can’t accept?

What could she possibly want to ask?

While gazing at Maron-san with a gentle look, Pom-sensei continued.

“Maron Melange had quite severe injuries. They were so extensive that many mages would have given up on treating them.”

“Huh, were they that dangerous?”

“Even with the teachers at their best, it was a wound severe enough that they could only barely keep her alive with multiple people treating her. So when I heard that it was a new student who treated Maron alone, I was surprised too,”

Pom-sensei said, wearing a wry smile.

She then placed her hand near Maron's abdomen, furrowing her brow with a puzzled expression.

"The deep wounds are completely healed. There are no scars or even traces of treatment. No matter how amazing the healing magic you used was, there should be some remnants to show where the injuries were. This is just impossible,"

she continued.

Suddenly, Pom-sensei clenched her fist with a somewhat frustrated expression.

"While I couldn't rush over since I was taking care of the injured students from the competition, I don't even know if I would have been able to help. So, I wanted to hear from you for reference. What kind of magic did you use to help Maron?"

Pom-sensei looked at me with a serious gaze.

From her eyes, I could sense her pure ambition and something akin to her kindness.

In some way, I felt like I understood a bit about her personality.

Pom-sensei, who treated students in the infirmary while describing them as troublemaking kids, probably worried about the injured students more than anyone else.

So, perhaps she wanted to hear from me so that she could treat even more students perfectly.

"In the past, there were some students who couldn't be fully healed even by me. Some had large scars left behind. I wanted to know if your magic could perfectly heal such cases as well," she explained.

Recalling those past students, Pom-sensei clenched her teeth in frustration.

I didn't think it would be helpful, but I decided to tell her about Probability Magic.

"...Caprice Chul, the Probability Magic 'Whims of the Angel.' It's a magic that can completely heal any wound if it succeeds. I have the highest possible Luck Value of 999, so it always succeeds," I explained the basics of Probability Magic.

Pom-sensei scratched her red hair with a somewhat frustrated expression and asked for confirmation.

"Normally, it's a magic that hardly ever succeeds, and no one uses it or even remembers it. So, with a Luck Value of 999, it means it will always succeed?"

"Yes, that's right."

As I heard it again, it sounded like a rule that defied common sense.

Then, out of nowhere, Pom-sensei burst into laughter.

"Guh... Hahaha! Hahaha! That's something else! Isn't that cheating, such magic! What an incredible talent we have here!"

Chapter 74

The Potential of Healing Magic

/ Level 999 / By IX

Pom-sensei bursts into laughter in the infirmary where someone is sleeping.

Fortunately, there was no sign of Maron-san waking up, and there were no other students resting, so there was no reprimand.

“Well, I understand now. It’s certainly strange that Maron has a completely refreshed body with that magic. We could never imitate that.”

Pom-sensei pats my shoulder again with a bang, a deep smile spreading across her face.

“I’m sorry. I guess I wasn’t much help.”

“No, that’s not true. Just knowing the existence of complete healing magic is more than enough.”

While saying that, she looks down at her own hands and clenches them tightly.

“There’s still that much potential left in magic. If we continue to delve into healing magic, we might eventually be able to do the same. That’s the hope Sachi showed me.”

I thought it was a positive attitude worth emulating.

Indeed, I might have been able to show that magic has that much potential.

“Lately, catalyst research has also made significant progress. Catalysts tailored to the color of mana are being developed.”

“The color of mana?”

“Mana has a preference for light objects, you know. It seems that recently it has been discovered that there are preference differences depending on the color. Like, this gem for red mana, and this gem for blue mana, catalyst development is being pursued according to the colors.”

“R-Really...”

Mana had such a secret.

But well, when I think about it, mana has different characteristics, so it's not surprising that there are preferences and differences.

If I can understand what kind of light objects my mana prefers, I can create the most suitable catalyst.

“Well, it seems that there isn't a catalyst that goes well with our white mana yet. But once it's completed, we'll be able to use even more powerful healing magic. I've been taught that healing magic still has many possibilities, so I'm feeling even more motivated.”

Pom-sensei says that and turns to me with a serious expression.

“That's why I'm grateful that you came here to teach me. And also, you saved the students in place of us teachers.

We're really grateful.”

“N-No, I just helped a friend, that's all.”

For now, I wonder if she's satisfied?

When I heard that I was being called by the infirmary teacher, I was a little worried about what could have happened, but if I was able to be of use to the teacher, then that's good.

I was also relieved to see Maron-san sleeping, so coming to the infirmary was worth it.

“By the way, um... Sachi, would you be willing to be my ‘assistant’ here?”

“Huh? Assistant?”

I was suddenly presented with a completely unexpected proposition.

Assistant, does that mean helping out in the infirmary or something?

“If Sachi is here, we'll have an extra pair of hands, and it might make things easier for me. There's no one else who is skilled in healing magic like you, a probability user. You're the only one who can properly assist in medical activities. So, be my assistant.”

“Uh...”

Well, if it helps the school, I'd be willing to lend a hand.

But I already have a lot on my plate, such as school requests and research club activities.

Unfortunately, I don't have the luxury to engage in medical activities in the infirmary.

Despite that, Pom-sensei wraps her arm around my shoulder like a mischievous senior trying to recruit me.

“If you help me out, I’ll let you take naps on the infirmary bed anytime you want. It’s the perfect place to slack off.”

“Well, napping does sound tempting, but I won’t skip classes for that.”

It’s a rather difficult situation to refuse.

Then, at that moment...

Knock, knock, knock.

The door is knocked with slightly more force, providing me with a saving grace.

“Oh, look, Pom-sensei. It seems we have a visitor.”

“Tch, we were in the middle of something.”

Pom-sensei releases her arm from my shoulder and walks towards the door, scratching her red hair.

Managing to escape the recruitment attempt, I heave a sigh of relief.

With that opportunity, I contemplate leaving the infirmary while Pom-sensei deals with the visitor...

But just as Pom-sensei opens the door with a hint of annoyance, the visitor rushes into the infirmary in a fluster.

Seeing that person, I involuntarily come to a halt.

“Ah...”

A woman in her late twenties with sharp eyes and chestnut hair.

I recognize that person—it's Maron-san's "mother."

Chapter 75

Mother

/ Level 999 / By IX

"Wh-where is my daughter...? Is my daughter safe...!?"

"..."

The mother anxiously questioned Professor Pom in a state of panic. Her appearance was that of a genuinely concerned and loving mother. Consequently, I found myself at a loss for words. It was because I felt that she was completely different from the strict mother I had seen before, Maron's mother.

'I won't let you forget why you enrolled in the academy and to become a national magician, so don't even think of pretending like you forgot.'

The stern expression of that mother, whom I had seen at the entrance of the special building, was nowhere to be found.

It seemed quite different from the impression I had in mind...

"Uh, um, my daughter...! Where is Maron Melange...!?"

"Maron Melange's mom, huh? I'm listening to your story. If you want to check on her, go ahead, she's sleeping in the farthest bed."

Though Professor Pom's words were vulgar, they were meant to calm down the frantic mother. She guided her to Maron's bed. As she arrived, the mother let out a relieved sigh upon seeing Maron asleep. Could it be that Maron's mother is actually...

As I observed her from the side, Professor Pom scratched her red hair and spoke to me.

“Sachi, you can go back to the dormitory if you want. Or do you want to wait here until Maron wakes up?”

“Yes, that’s right... I’m worried if she’ll wake up properly, so if it’s possible, I’d like to stay here...”

At that moment...

“Sachi Malmerard.”

“Huh!?”

“There’s something I’d like you to do. If you’re busy, it’s fine, but if you have time, could you come to the headmaster’s office now?”

Suddenly, the voice of the headmaster echoed in my mind. Upon hearing that, I swallowed the words I was about to say and instead responded to Professor Pom with a different line.

“...I was actually thinking about it, but I’ve been called by the headmaster, so I’ll excuse myself here.”

I didn’t know what the headmaster wanted me to do. Since I didn’t have any particular plans, I decided to accept the request.

“I see. Thanks for listening and taking care of things, Sachi. Don’t get hurt.”

Whether it was a standard phrase she used for all students or not, Professor Pom waved her hand while appearing accustomed to saying it. With her words lingering in my mind, I was about to leave the infirmary, but...

“Oh, um!”

“...?”

I was immediately called back. The one who called out to me from behind was Maron's mother.

"Could it be that you're the student who saved my daughter... the one who healed Maron's wounds?"

"Yes, well..."

I responded with confusion, never expecting Maron's mother to approach me first. She straightened her posture and gracefully bowed her head.

"I apologize for not noticing earlier. I watched everything from the spectator seats at the arena, but I couldn't clearly see your face..."

"N-No, that's not a problem..."

The image of the strict mother I had seen before at the entrance of the special building lingered in my mind, making me nervous. Then she said something that only heightened my tension.

"Um, I heard that you've been called by the headmaster, but before that, would it be possible for the two of us to have a conversation, even if it's just for a little while?"

"Huh..."

A conversation between the two of us?

Why just the two of us...? I briefly questioned this, but it quickly became apparent that the reason was undoubtedly about Maron. Judging from the atmosphere, she probably wanted to express her gratitude or perhaps she was curious, like Professor Pom, about what magic I used to help Maron.

"Hmm? If you're going to have a conversation, you can use this

infirmary or something. No one else will come here.”

Professor Pom kindly suggested, so I decided to have a conversation with Maron’s mother in the infirmary, just the two of us.

“I-I’m not in a hurry, so if it’s just for a little while...”

When I conveyed that, she replied with a “Thank you” in return.

“Alright, let me know when you’re done talking! I’ll be in the adjacent preparation room.”

After saying that, Professor Pom left the infirmary, leaving Maron’s mother and me alone. Well, technically, Maron was also here..... sleeping.

Still feeling a slight tension, I waited for her to speak. Eventually, she bowed her head again, with even more elegance than before.

“I sincerely thank you for helping my daughter.”

“...”

Her words were straightforward yet heartfelt expressions of gratitude. Indeed, the woman before me was a devoted mother who cherished her daughter from the bottom of her heart.

“If it weren’t for you, my daughter would have surely been in danger. Your power was truly extraordinary. I have nothing but gratitude,” Maron’s mother expressed her praise directly.

“N-No, it’s not... I mean...”

Embarrassment and confusion intertwined within me upon receiving such straightforward praise. Finally, I decided to ask her about

something that had been bothering me.

“Um, if I may ask... You are Maron’s mother, right?”

“...? Y-Yes. I am Noa, Maron’s mother. Noa Melange.”

...Yes, that’s right.

There’s no way I could have mistaken her.

However, the impression left by that strict mother I had seen before was quite strong, making me doubt if her current gentle demeanor was genuine.

“Um, is there something strange...?”

“Ah, no...! I happened to see Maron talking with someone before, and the atmosphere back then was quite different, so...”

Ah, no! I blurted out the fact that I had overheard their conversation without meaning to.

Upon hearing that, Maron’s mother... or rather, Noa, flashed a wry smile on her beautiful face.

“...You saw an embarrassing side of me.”

“I-I’m sorry...! I didn’t mean to eavesdrop...”

As I hurriedly apologized, Noa, with an expression of self-reflection, continued speaking.

“As you said, I am excessively strict with my daughter. It must have seemed very strange to see me worried about Maron like this.”

“...”

There seemed to be something behind her complex expression. Noa seemed to be hiding something.

“Is there... a reason why you're so strict?”

I felt like I was delving too deeply, but I couldn't help but ask. Noa appeared to be a normal, kind mother. But when she spoke to Maron, she maintained a strict attitude. Noa intentionally chose to be that way, but why?

It must be quite difficult for her to purposefully be strict with Maron, whom she cares for so deeply.

At that moment, Noa gently stroked Maron's hair as a serene smile, reminiscent of a saint, graced her cheeks.

“I want her to become strong like no one else. I don't want her to become like ‘the old me’.”

Chapter 75

Strong Child

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Like your old-self...?”

In Noa’s expression as she spoke, I sensed a hint of uneasiness.

“Before I married into the Melange family, I was with my original family, the Torusse family. There, an overwhelmingly male-dominant environment was established, and due to my lack of magical talent, I was ‘despised’ by all my male siblings.”

“...”

Noa seemed to be recalling those days, as a self-deprecating smile faintly appeared on her face.

Being despised in my original family due to my gender and lack of magical talent. It sounded like a very familiar story to me, as someone who was mistreated due to having a magical power level of 1.

Noa also endured such suffering...

“That’s why when I married into the Melange family and became pregnant with Maron, I decided to make her the strongest mage, more than anyone else. So that she wouldn’t be oppressed like me, and to prevent her from being despised by the people of the Torusse family.”

“So, that’s why you insisted on transferring her to the Special Class, right?”

“In my excessive worry, I realized that I had imposed an overwhelming proposal. I thought it would be for Maron’s own good. I

admit that I might have been a little too strict. However, I didn't want Maron to experience the same things I did.

I wanted her to become the strongest mage, to acquire an undeniable power that would protect her from oppression by anyone, here at this academy."

Noa expressed her firm determination, speaking in a strong voice.

Feeling the undeniable love of a mother, I couldn't say anything in response.

"...That's what I thought, but..."

"...?"

"After witnessing the Starry blossom Festival, I've decided to reconsider my thoughts a bit."

Witnessed the Starry blossom Festival?

Come to think of it, Maron mentioned that she had a brief conversation with Noa the day before the final day of the Starry blossom Festival. She expressed her opposition to transferring to the Special Class and changing her room in the dormitory, making a promise to reconsider based on the results of the festival.

Did her efforts somehow reach Noa's heart?

Noa gazed at Maron's sleeping face with a gentle look in her eyes.

"Maron has already become so strong. I watched her from the first day, and she showed remarkable achievements that I couldn't believe she was my own daughter. Taking on a leading role and brilliantly leading the class to the top of the school..."

It seemed that Noa had been watching Maron's accomplishments from the spectator seats all along.

Realizing that Maron's hard work had truly reached her mother, I couldn't help but feel happy.

"Even without me being so strict, Maron had grown so strong on her own. It's the result of her extraordinary talent and the effort she puts into it, not settling for anything less."

Noa turned her gaze back to me and continued, looking straight into my eyes.

"Therefore, I'm retracting the matter of transferring her to the Special Class. I had also requested the provision of a single room in the dormitory for the sake of focusing on her studies, but that request has already been withdrawn."

"S-So, that means Maron will continue to be in the same class as us?"

Does that mean we can continue our school life unchanged?

In response to that question, Noa nodded and smiled gently.

"If I were to transfer this child to the Special Class, I thought I wouldn't be able to see that smile she showed in class anymore. Above all..."

She continued to gaze at me with a meaningful look.

"If a 'talented mage' like you is by her side, I believe it will be a good stimulus for her."

"..."

Is she complimenting me?

Regardless, it seems that Noa has reconsidered her thoughts, and I feel relieved that we can continue our school life together with Maron.

“Please continue to be by Maron’s side as her friend.”

With that request, I confidently declared, “Leave it to me.”

In fact, I would rather make the request myself. I don’t have many friends to begin with, so I don’t want to take away such a precious person.

At that moment, I heard Maron’s sleeping breath, “Hmm...”

Noa and I were startled and turned towards her, but Maron had simply turned over in her sleep.

Looking at her with gentle eyes, Noa couldn’t resist and asked a question.

“By the way, don’t you think it would be better to show this kind and gentle side of you directly to Maron? I think it would be beneficial for both of you.”

“Well, I feel a bit embarrassed to suddenly change my attitude towards her... Well, I hope I can gradually change little by little.”

Noa, wearing a shy smile that closely resembled Maron, had a blush on her cheeks.

Chapter 77

The Truth

/ Level 999 / By IX

After finishing the conversation in the infirmary, I made my way to the principal's office.

Following the summons I received from the principal, when I arrived at the designated location, there...

“Eh...?”

There was the blonde, young girl version of the principal.

Well, this was somewhat expected.

However, there were a few more people waiting besides the principal, including the teachers.

That was unexpected.

Moreover, there was a tense atmosphere, and I involuntarily took a step back.

“Thank you for coming, Sachi Malmurad. I apologize for summoning you so suddenly.”

“Um, did I do something wrong?”

“Hmm? No, not really...”

Ah, I'm relieved.

I thought I might have done something to warrant being scolded.

Considering that several teachers were waiting in the principal's office, it was natural for a student to be concerned.

But then, why was I called here?

Just as I pondered this question...

“Hmm...?”

In the center of the principal's office, I noticed someone hidden among the teachers.

Seeing that, my heart unexpectedly skipped a beat.

“Why...?”

A blonde-haired, golden-eyed male student wearing the uniform of the second year.

It was my actual older brother, “Maiss Gracier.”

The person who caused a disturbance during the Star Festival, leading to its cancellation.

I had seen him being escorted away by the teachers after I stopped his rampage with a restraining spell, but I never expected him to be brought here.

As I looked at my brother, who was firmly restrained in a binding chair, the principal began speaking.

“The reason we called Sachi here is none other than this. We thought we might be able to gather some information about the incident of his

rampage from this student. While the other rampaging students remained unconscious, for some reason, this one remained fully conscious. And in the unlikely event that this individual goes berserk again, we wanted to rely on your restraining spell to subdue him peacefully.”

“Huh? Me...?”

“We can use our own magic to restrain him, but the spells we have at our disposal would have considerable effects on his body. On the other hand, your restraining spell causes almost no burden on the target. Additionally, you have complete control over the duration of the binding. That’s why we thought it would be appreciated if you could lend a hand.”

I see, well, if that’s the case, I can understand why I was summoned.

In other words, I was brought in as a means to effectively interrogate Maiss.

However, the principal’s intentions... ended up having the opposite effect.

“Sa...chi...!?”

Just as Maiss, who was supposed to be restrained and hanging his head, caught sight of me, his eyes widened in an instant.

Immediately after, he started shaking his limbs violently.

“Sachi! How dare you...! How dare you interfere with me...! You talentless failure...!!!”

“W-What’s going on all of a sudden...!?”

Seeing Maiss suddenly go wild, the principal flinched, shaking his delicate shoulders.

The teachers were also taken aback and hurriedly tried to hold onto Maiss's limbs.

Meanwhile, I...

“[The die has been cast—Guidance of the gods—If you bear grudges, bear them against your own fate]—[The mischievous fate, For'tuna]”

I chanted the spell of restraint, pointing my finger at Maiss.

A yellow light emitted from my fingertips and struck Maiss's forehead with a snap.

Instantly, his body stiffened like paralysis, and his flailing limbs came to a sudden halt.

For now, we can breathe a sigh of relief.

While everyone let out a breath, the principal wiped the sweat off her forehead and asked me.

“I sensed a reaction as if you knew each other, but did you two have a previous acquaintance?”

“Well, um, how should I put it...”

How should I explain?

It's not like it's something I need to hide, so it should be okay to tell them, right?

As if speaking on behalf of my thoughts, Maiss spoke in a hoarse voice.

“S...Sachi...! Why are... you here...? Why would the useless little sister who was expelled from the Graciel family... be at the Magic Academy...!”

“Well, um, it’s pretty much what my brother just said.”

“I see. So it’s a complicated family situation. I apologize for prying so rudely. Let’s all pretend we didn’t hear anything.”

“Oh, no, it’s fine.”

It doesn’t really matter now that I’ve been kicked out of my family.

I’m not completely indifferent about it, but at this point, it would be more efficient if everyone knows about it.

Setting aside my story that doesn’t really matter, I urged the principal to proceed with the conversation.

“Don’t worry about that and please continue.”

“I-I see. Then, let’s proceed with the questioning again. Depending on this person’s statement, we might uncover the truth behind the rampage incident.”

Saying that, the principal raised her small right hand, directing it towards Maiss.

“[Unnecessary interrogation—The door to an open heart—This is a world without liars]—[The forgotten deception, Ubrei Factis]...”

A faint, pale blue light flickered in the principal’s right hand.

It floated unsteadily in the air, just like the previous spell, “[The mischievous fate, For-Tuna],” and struck Maiss’s forehead with a snap.

As I watched the bluish-white light slowly dissolve into Maiss's body, I tilted my head.

“What... was that spell just now?”

“Haven't you learned it yet? It's a simple way to put it, but it's a 'confession spell.' It makes your thoughts unintentionally come out of your mouth. It's an indispensable spell for interrogations.”

Whoa, what kind of magic is that...?

It's a scary magic in various ways.

While it's convenient, it seems like it could be used for all sorts of things if someone wanted to misuse it.

“Now then, Maiss Graciél. You shall become a valuable source of information. The first thing I want to ask is if you have any idea about the cause of your rampage.”

Everyone in the room held their breath, their tension palpable.

The truth behind the frequent incidents of mage rampages.

It had remained a mystery until now, but it might finally be revealed this time.

It depended on whether the actual rampager had any clue about the cause...

With hopes riding on that possibility, the principal, who had begun the questioning, stared intently at Maiss's face.

And then, Maiss slowly parted his lips...

His words reverberated throughout the principal's office, leaving everyone in utter shock.

“...Mistral.”

“Eh...?”

“The Anti-Magic Society ‘Mistral.’ I became stronger with the ‘medicine’ they provided me...”

Mistral.

That name, familiar to my ears, made my heart once again emit an unpleasant sound.

Chapter 78

The Guardian Daughter

/ Level 999 / By IX

It wasn't just me who was perplexed upon hearing the name of the anti-magic organization, "Mistral." The surrounding teachers exchanged glances, visibly disturbed. Even the school principal wore an incredulous expression and asked Maiss again.

"M-Mistral...you say? Are you truly claiming that you had contact with that anti-magic organization?"

In response to that question, Maiss nodded.

"They left a souvenir at my dorm room door. Inside was a potion that increases magical power. Along with it was a note that said, 'If you want to gain power, drink this.'"

Silence fell among everyone except for Maiss, who were astonished by this revelation. A souvenir from Mistral, containing a potion that boosts magical power. There were far too many inexplicable aspects to this situation. First of all...

"Why would they be in the Magic Academy? I've always been vigilant against suspicious individuals, not only within the campus but also in the student dormitory. Even though it was possible for the general public to enter during the Starflower Festival, they shouldn't have been able to evade my watchful eye..."

The principal regularly monitored the academy using magical surveillance. It seemed that her vigilance extended to the dormitory area as well. And yet, someone managed to slip past and deliver something to Maiss's dorm room...

"Could it be...someone among the students?"

“Or perhaps a ‘collaborator’ among the teachers.”

“I hate to suggest such a drastic possibility, but honestly, it seems highly likely.”

Even if a student or teacher had engaged in suspicious behavior within the academy, it wouldn't have drawn much attention. The principal primarily focused on ordinary people, and the students and teachers weren't on high alert. If there was a chance for them to engage in suspicious activities during the Starflower Festival, there would have been no one else besides the students and teachers. Moreover, given the frequent troubles suspected to be caused by Mistral during the entrance and advancement exams, it wouldn't be surprising anymore if there were collaborators within the academy.

“We will consider that possibility as we continue the search for the culprit. But for now...”

The principal turned her gaze back to Maiss and questioned him again.

“Why did you drink the potion given to you, knowing it was a gift from the anti-magic organization? It's insane to consume it with full knowledge of its origins. Why would you commit such a foolish act?”

Under the influence of a truth-telling spell, Maiss began revealing only the truth.

“I had no choice.”

“...?”

“I absolutely had to gain power. I was aware of the risks of losing control, but I fell for Mistral's offer. Everything was for the sake of the ‘Glacier family’...”

“Eh...”

I couldn't help but react to this.

My heart skipped a beat upon hearing the name of my family, the Glacier family.

“Glacier? Are you referring to the ancestral home of Maiss Glacier? It's also the former home of Sachi Malmarard, right?”

“Yes, that's correct...”

Why is the name of the Glacier family coming up at this moment? Did something happen to that household?

As if in response to my doubts, Maiss continued.

“The Glacier family is currently burdened with a substantial ‘debt.’ There have been poor harvests and frequent attacks by magical creatures on the estate. The accumulation of these ‘misfortunes’ has led to financial difficulties, and there's even a possibility of relinquishing the position of the Marquisate.”

“Why is this happening all of a sudden?”

From my childhood perspective, the Glacier family's business seemed to be flourishing. How did it deteriorate to such an extent in the past ten years? It was as if a series of “misfortunes” had occurred right after I disappeared.

“Oh...”

Misfortune.

Could it be that?

Did the family's situation worsen because I, with my luck value of

999, was no longer there?

As if losing an amulet that wards off misfortune...

“In that case, you desired power. Can we assume that your interference with Maron Mélange was intentional?”

“She was getting in the way, drawing unwanted attention. That’s all.”

Listening to the conversation, I secretly grew more resentful.

He needed to gain power for the sake of the Glacier family?

For something like that...

By accepting Mistral’s offer...

Stealing away the joy of many people...

And even hurting my friends.

As I clenched my fist quietly, the teachers exchanged nods, summarizing the information they had gathered.

“It’s clear that this was a targeted act against Maron Melange.”

“So Mistral is meticulously investigating the students’ surroundings, choosing potential individuals to manipulate.”

The true purpose of Mistral remains unknown.

Why they wanted to provoke Maiss’s rampage can only be answered by asking them directly. However, at this stage, we can explain the reasons behind their targeting of Maiss.

Maiss, who sought power for the revival of the family, would easily consume the potion with just a little manipulation.

Mistral must have targeted Maiss with that assumption.

The fact that they thoroughly investigate the students' surroundings is terrifying.

And as a result, Maiss ended up consuming the potion, not obtaining the desired power, and falling into a rampage.

Maiss didn't anticipate the situation escalating to this extent and began to express regret.

"Now I've lost the opportunity to make a name for myself in the world of magic. At this rate, the Glacier family will undoubtedly decline and perish completely. If that happens, there's only one path left..."

"...?"

Suddenly, Maiss turned their golden eyes towards me.

"Sachi, come back to the Glacier family."

"...Huh?"

Chapter 79

The Marquess Family

[1 Comment](#) / [Level 999](#) / By [IX](#)

I couldn't believe my ears.

My brother, who was the cause of my expulsion from my parents' house, had the audacity to ask me to return to that very same house.

Maiss began explaining the reason in a serious tone.

"It may be hard to believe, but since you were expelled from the house, a series of unnatural misfortunes has been occurring. Considering your abnormally high luck value, I suspect there is a deep connection."

The teachers around us seemed unable to comprehend the conversation, exchanging perplexed glances.

Meanwhile, I continued to listen to Maiss's voice in silence, tightening my clenched fist even more.

"If you return, all the problems surrounding the Gracier family will be resolved. Although you were once expelled by our father, I will attempt to persuade him. It would be mutually beneficial for you to regain the position of the Marquess's family. So, Sachi, come back to the Gracier family."

"..."

I felt as if Maiss's invisible hand was reaching out to grasp mine.

Indeed, if I were to return to my parents' house, the misfortunes

surrounding the Gracier family would likely improve.

But...

In response to this selfish invitation, I unintentionally let out a vulgar remark.

“What a damn joke...!”

As if I were about to raise my clenched fist, I continued to speak in anger.

“You want me to come back to that house...? Save your sleep talk for later. I was treated like dirt just because I had no magical power. I was treated as a stain, forced to wear ragged clothes in a small room in the corner of the mansion, and not even given a decent meal. There’s no way I’m going back to that house now.”

First of all, who does he think is responsible for my expulsion?

Thinking once again about that, Maiss’s eyes widened in surprise.

“Aren’t you concerned about the position of the Marquess’s family...? There may never be another opportunity for you to return to the aristocracy...”

“Unfortunately for you, I have absolutely no interest in positions. I’m living happily even without them, and I already have a cherished family.”

In my mind, the gentle smile of Mulbery-san and the warm view of our forest home blurred into my vision.

I already have another important family.

There's a home I should return to.

Even without a position, I have kind family members and friends, so I don't feel the need for such things anymore.

"Have you forgotten the gratitude for being raised by the Gracier family...?"

"Feeling gratitude for that kind of upbringing would be unrealistic. There was a clear difference in treatment between siblings, and I wasn't even given a single toy. Hey, can you understand the feeling of sleeping on a hard and cold floor, in pitch darkness without any light? Can you, who was favored, understand that?"

Memories of my difficult childhood from ten years ago resurfaced vividly in my mind.

A time when I was clearly mistreated simply because of my low magical power.

I could only watch my favored brother from a distance, filled with envy.

In the end, I was expelled from my own home under false accusations of breaking a vase.

Feel gratitude for being raised? Spare me the nonsense.

"You ungrateful little sister...! I allowed you to return to the Gracier family..."

"I couldn't care less about what happens to the Gracier family. Besides, I am Sachi Marmelard now, and I have no interest in a family that has nothing to do with me. So..."

I glared at Maiss with a contemptuous look.

“If you want to perish, then go ahead and perish on your own, you idiot.”

Maiss looked frozen, his eyes chilled as he stared back at me in astonishment.

It seems he genuinely believed he could bring me back.

Unfortunately for him, I have a different opinion.

But before I could make that clear, I changed the subject, albeit belatedly.

“By the way, aren’t there things you should be doing?”

“Th-things I should be doing...?”

“You should apologize. Apologize for ruining the Starry Blossom Festival, for hurting my friends, and for falsely accusing me ten years ago. You should apologize for all of that first. Normally, that should be the starting point of our conversation.”

Things are all messed up in terms of order.

This person hasn’t shown any signs of remorse.

While I can let go of the accusations against me, he should apologize first for what happened at the Starflower Festival.

Bringing up the topic of the festival caught the attention of the teachers once again, and they leaned in to listen.

However, Maiss sneered at me with a faint smile.

“You want me to apologize...? Your childish mind hasn’t grown a bit,

it seems.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Let me educate your childish self. Adults do whatever it takes to achieve their goals. If you want me to apologize, you have to force those words out of me, even against my will.”

I’m actually impressed that such lines come out in a situation like this.

But forcing an apology out of someone like that would be meaningless.

“And I am different from you. I won’t hesitate to use any means to achieve my goals. I will definitely bring you back to the Gracier family.”

His determination still seems unshakable as he glowed with golden eyes.

He thinks I’ll change my mind easily.

But soon enough, I would come to understand the meaning behind his words.

“It’s not difficult at all. It seems that ‘friends’ are important to you.”

“What...?”

“If I bother your so-called friends, perhaps you’ll become more obedient?”

Immediately after, Maiss’s laughter, sounding mad, echoed through the room.

Due to the confession spell, his thoughts were slipping out of his mouth one after another.

Malice overflowed from him like an unstoppable spring.

To think he would go so far as to think of bringing me back to my parents' house...

Before I knew it, my body moved on its own, and I found myself grabbing Maiss's collar as he sat in the restraining chair.

"If you lay a finger on my friends again, I swear, this time I'll..."

Before anger overwhelmed me, the headmaster called out from behind.

"Worry not, Sachi Marmelard. I won't allow any more nonsense from him. In fact, it might be impossible."

"Huh?"

I let go of Maiss's collar and turned around to face the headmaster, who spoke solemnly while exchanging nods with the other teachers.

"Maiss Gracier of Class 2-C. This person conspired with the anti-magic organization Mistral and caused the incident of the rampage during the Starry Blossom Festival. Furthermore, he intentionally caused serious injuries to fellow students.

Therefore, he is subject to disciplinary action, and under the name of Headmaster Ananas Clostata, I hereby declare his

'expulsion from the academy.' You shall leave this academy immediately."

"E-expulsion...?"

Maiss's golden eyes widened to their limits.

He probably never expected to be expelled.

But when you consider the situation, it's only natural.

“At the same time, you will be detained by the National Mage Union. The charges are self-explanatory. Given the meticulous investigation into the entire series of incidents and the examination of the substances you consumed, it's unlikely that you will be released for several years or so.”

Maiss's face visibly paled.

Immediately after, he exploded with anger, veins popping on his forehead.

“Me...! Maiss Gracier, the heir of the Gracier Marquess family...! Don't mess with me, you worthless fools!”

He struggled, his bound limbs flailing, as if trying to break free from the restraining chair.

Sensing the situation, I quickly raised my right hand and activated a spell.

“【The die is cast—Guidance of the gods—If you resent, resent your own fate】—【Caprice of Destiny, For”Tuna】!”

A yellow light struck Maiss's forehead, causing his entire body to stiffen as if paralyzed.

Still, he continued to glare at me with his expression of fury, and I...

I sent him words filled with all the anger I had harbored, accompanied by a cold gaze.

“Goodbye, dear brother Maiss.”

“...!”

A reversal of roles from that time.

This time, it was Maiss Gracier, my older brother, who was being expelled from his place.

I wonder if he can understand even just a little of what it feels like to be the one expelled.

Chapter 80

Total War

/ Level 999 / By IX

After finishing the interrogation of my brother, Maiss...

Maiss, who was restrained, was taken out of the headmaster's office and handed over to the members of the National Magicians Union.

With only a few teachers and myself left in the headmaster's office, the headmaster released the disguise magic and returned to her appearance as a blonde young girl.

Feeling a deep sense of relief now that the person with whom I had a deep grudge was no longer in front of me, I was suddenly addressed by the headmaster.

"I apologize, Sachi Malmurard."

"Huh? What is it?"

"I called you here without knowing about your relationship with Maiss Graciél. I unnecessarily caused you distress."

"Oh, well..."

When formally apologized to, it was somewhat difficult to respond. It was true that I was initially surprised and felt uncomfortable after talking to Maiss, but...

"On the contrary, I'm grateful to be called here."

"Huh? Why...?"

“I did go through some tough times, and I recalled unpleasant things from the past, but more than that, I feel refreshed now. With this, I feel like I have completely severed ties with the Graciél family.”

“...”

Somewhere in my heart, I still felt connected to that family.

I only learned later that my brother Maiss attends the same school.

As someone living in the world of magicians, I thought it would be impossible to completely cut off ties with that family.

However, as a result of this recent incident, Maiss was expelled from the school.

There is no longer anyone by my side who reminds me of past events and that family.

Above all, I was able to directly confront Maiss with the grievances I had been carrying for so long.

That’s why my feelings are now as clear as a sunny sky.

“So, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak frankly to my brother.”

“I’m glad to hear you say that.”

The headmaster seemed relieved, patting her chest.

“Anyway, the information you obtained from my brother, will it be useful?”

“Huh? Oh, yes, of course. Thanks to him, we now know that the true

culprit behind the magician rampage incident is the anti-magician organization Mistral.”

Next, the headmaster, while gazing out the window, continued with a serious tone.

“With this, we know that we can obtain the means to recover the unconscious rampaging individuals directly from Mistral. I have already shared the information with the National Magicians Union, so it’s finally going to be a full-scale war against them.”

“...”

The war between the National Magicians Union and Mistral.

The time has finally come.

Mistral, the anti-magician organization that has repeatedly meddled with the magic academy.

They have also launched various attacks against the magic nation of Orchid.

It seems they intend to settle the long-standing grudge once and for all.

“Until now, it has only been minor meddling, and the magic nation has been on the receiving end all along. But this recent magician rampage incident has caused numerous casualties and damages. It’s clear that it’s an organization that cannot be ignored any longer. Though I feel we are being too sluggish about it.”

The headmaster let out a sigh with an exasperated expression.

She might be the only one in the whole country who openly criticizes the magic nation itself.

I can't imitate her behavior. While I was thinking such things, the headmaster continued.

"Well, I understand the sluggishness. We haven't been able to pinpoint their exact location yet, despite trying every method available. We have been unable to catch them by the tail. There is no way to initiate an attack under these circumstances."

"Huh? You still don't know where Mistral is?"

"If we knew, we would have already sent the entire army of the National Magicians. They are skilled at hiding and leave no trace behind."

No wonder the magic nation has been on the defensive all this time.

Well, yeah, that makes sense. If you know where the evil organization is, you should immediately take action.

Then, one of the teachers who was listening suddenly spoke up to the headmaster.

"Um, regarding that matter..."

"Hmm?"

"The National Magicians Union has requested an investigation within the school premises."

"Investigation?"

"Due to the recent rampage incident during the Starflower Festival, there is a possibility that members of Mistral have infiltrated the school. Additionally, there is a chance of a mole within the school, so a thorough investigation of the academy is necessary to trace their whereabouts..."

“Well, I expected as much. The magic nation is willing to use anything to catch their tails. I don’t dislike that way of thinking, but when I consider tackling every little thing meticulously, my motivation suddenly drops...”

The headmaster once again slumped her shoulders, visibly exasperated.

Investigating the mole and searching for traces of Mistral.

If that goes well, they might be able to pinpoint Mistral, which has eluded them until now.

That’s probably why the National Magicians Union requested an investigation from the school’s side. But for the headmaster, it’s quite a daunting task.

Well, the school is already vast, and thoroughly searching every nook and cranny would be quite laborious.

Moreover, they have to determine whether there is a mole within the school.

It will be mentally and physically exhausting.

“Oh...”

As I pondered all of this, a thought suddenly struck me.

Searching for the mole. Finding individuals associated with Mistral, right?

If that’s the case, maybe I can “help” with something.

“Um, there’s just one thing I’d like to try...”

“...?”

Although it heavily relies on luck, I decided to share my idea with the headmaster and the others.

Chapter 81

The Mole

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Mr. Heimbeere!”

“Hmm?”

Heimbeere Sejiru, the homeroom teacher of Class C, had gained deep trust from many students. Most teachers at the Magic Academy had strict personalities and kept their distance from students more than necessary. However, Heimbeere stood out among the teachers by establishing an unusual close relationship with the students. He actively approached students in need, regardless of their grade level, and willingly listened to their concerns outside of academics. As a result, he was greatly admired by male students, and some female students even harbored romantic feelings for him.

The handsome and passionate teacher, like a picture-perfect image, was once again being approached by female students today.

“Mr. Heimbeere! We’re having a small post-Starry Blossom Festival gathering in our room later. You should come too!”

“It’s like a consolation party since it got canceled! We’re inviting quite a few girls!”

“Hey, cut it out. If it got known that a male teacher entered the girls’ dormitory, it would be a serious problem.”

Heimbeere scratched his reddish-brown short hair and let out a wry smile. In response, the female students who had approached him responded in unison, giggling with joy. It was a familiar sight for Heimbeere.

“Most importantly, I still have the aftermath of the Starry Blossom Festival to deal with. We’ve already had a major incident, so I don’t have time to join the gathering. You all should return to the dormitory quickly, so you won’t get involved in any more strange incidents.”

“Yes, sir!”

Without showing any objections to the gathering itself, Heimbeere gave minimal instructions and sent them back to the dormitory. He was a teacher who would be immediately opposed by other teachers if they heard about it, but he was tolerant enough to overlook it. There was no other “good teacher” admired by the students as much as him. That was the primary reason why so many students looked up to him.

After that, Heimbeere headed towards the storage room behind the school building to put away the tools used in the Starry Blossom Festival competition. As he opened the door and entered, he was called out from behind at that very moment.

“Um, Mr. Heimbeere.”

“Hmm?”

When he turned around, he saw a familiar person standing there. She was a petite girl with short black bobbed hair and innocent-looking round eyes, giving off a quiet impression, contrasting with the mischievous female students earlier.

She was Slys Valde, a student belonging to Class C, Heimbeere’s class.

“Slys, you should also go back to the dormitory as soon as possible. We just had an incident during the Starry Blossom Festival. If your friends have already left, I can escort you to the dormitory...”

“Mr. Heimbeere, do you remember that conversation?”

“...”

The sudden change of topic left Heimbeere furrowing his brows in confusion. That conversation. Even without being told, he immediately understood what it referred to. It was about the “confession” he received from Slys Valde, a student in his Class C, a week before the Starry Blossom Festival.

At that time, Heimbeere indirectly turned her down, saying that he didn’t have time to listen to her due to the busy preparations for the festival. In response, Slys had asked him to talk again after the festival.

Heimbeere had been trying to keep some distance from Slys to avoid that conversation, but it seemed that the time had come.

“If it’s after the Starry Blossom Festival, you said you would listen to me. I truly... have feelings for you, Mr. Heimbeere.”

“...We are a teacher and a student. With that boundary between us, we cannot become involved romantically.”

“____!”

Heimbeere conveyed his rejection clearly once again. Knowing that both the one conveying and the one receiving the message would feel uncomfortable, he had wanted to avoid this conversation as much as possible.

However, now that he knew Slys’s feelings were genuine and that she desired a serious relationship, he had made up his mind to firmly reject her.

“I am genuinely happy that you trust me as a teacher. That’s why, as a teacher, I want to witness your growth as a student until the end.”

“...”

Slys started to shed tears and her voice trembled with sobs. Since they

were inside the storage room behind the school building, no one else was present. She let her tears flow freely, knowing that no one would see her crying.

To stop those tears, Heimbeere spoke again.

“...Also, let me tell you this, just in case.”

“Huh...?”

“It’s not that you lack attractiveness as a woman, Slys. Your kindness and charm are qualities I have seen multiple times as your teacher. If we were attending the school as students of the same grade, I might have involuntarily been drawn to you.”

“...”

Words carefully chosen, the utmost consolation. It seemed to reach Slys’s heart, as she found herself no longer shedding tears. Heimbeere, with a tinge of guilt in his expression, continued to show concern for her.

“For now, as teacher and student, it’s difficult for us to be involved romantically. So, if after you graduate from the academy, you still have feelings for me, would you come and confess your feelings again? At that time, I will seriously consider it.”

There were a little over two years left until graduation. It was quite rare for a female student to continue liking the same teacher until graduation. Usually, they would develop feelings for like-minded students attending the same school.

However, if Slys’s feelings remained unchanged even after graduation, Heimbeere said he would seriously consider a relationship.

Understanding his intention, Slys smiled deeply, showing that there was still hope.

“Yes, please! I’ll do that!”

With her smile restored, Slys said she would return to the dormitory, where her friend was waiting in the classroom, and left the scene.

Afterward, Heimbeere resumed his work in the storage room.

A mirror image of a perfect teacher who could conclude a conversation without hurting his female students, embodying the ideal teacher who dedicated himself earnestly to both work and students, without any trace of carnal desires.

But then, in the solitude of the storage room, Heimbeere suddenly lowered his head.

“Heh, hahaha... Kuhahaha...”

Unexpectedly, an eerie laughter escaped from his lips.

In an instant, Heimbeere’s face contorted, and he turned his gaze towards the direction Slys had left with a scornful look.

“Idiot, who would date a pathetic girl like you?”

A deep feeling of disgust turned into a voice that resounded through the storage room.

Heimbeere trembled, shaking off the chill running through his entire body, and clicked his tongue.

“A national magician wannabe like you can go to hell. You even had the audacity to chase after me all the way to the storage room. Disgusting.”

The kind and approachable teacher from before was nowhere to be seen.

In his place stood a figure filled with hatred, despising both national magicians and the students of the academy.

Recalling the confession just now, Heimbeere grimaced with discomfort.

“Well, if I want to stay inconspicuous in this academy, I have to avoid such obstacles. I have to accept that.”

He whispered to himself, nodding quietly and hidden from the world.

“On the flip side, it’s evidence that I have gained significant trust from the students. If I continue like this, it won’t be difficult to ‘undermine the Magic Academy from within’ without anyone suspecting.”

As he had envisioned, he had successfully blended into the academy as a kind-hearted teacher. He was a perfect teacher of the Magic Academy, with no trace of unnaturalness. However, his true identity was that of a member of a completely different organization.

“If I accomplish this on my own, my position within ‘Mistral’ will skyrocket. And I will be able to personally bring an end to the Magic Nation...” he thought.

Heimbeere Sejiru, the homeroom teacher of Class C, was also a spy for the anti-magic organization Mistral. He had been sent as an agent to undermine the Magic Academy from within and had caused trouble for the academy in various ways.

During the entrance exams, he had accelerated the growth of magical beasts. During the final exams, he had used specialized tools to hinder the function of magical elements. And during the Starry Blossom Festival, he had given a special potion that caused magical elements to go out of control to a male student.

He had previously carried out similar nefarious acts as an undercover

operative.

He harbored a deep grudge against national magicians and had dedicated his utmost efforts for years to overthrow the Magic Nation from within the academy.

Playing the role of a good teacher was a means to continue his presence in the academy without raising suspicion.

Unaware of all this, the students never doubted Heimbeere as a kind teacher, and everything went according to his plans.

“Just continue with your trivial games of friendship and romance. I will turn your enjoyable school life and refreshing youth into hell in an instant!” he thought.

Taking advantage of the impending conflict between the Magic Nation and Mistral, he planned to completely destroy the Magic Academy. With that, he would bring an end to the era of magic and rise to a higher position within Mistral, ruling the world.

Thinking about the realization of his plan, Heimbeere couldn't help but let out a grandiose laugh in his mind.

In an instant...

“Foul Play of Destiny, ‘For’Tuna’!”

Zap! He felt a surge of electricity-like sensation on his back. Immediately after, his whole body was struck by intense numbness, and Heimbeere collapsed, unable to utter a sound. Feeling the cold sensation of the warehouse floor, he was deeply bewildered.

“W-What... is happening!?”

At that moment...

He saw someone standing near the entrance of the warehouse. Struggling to move his eyes, he directed his gaze towards that person and recognized them as a student of the academy. Wearing the skirt-type uniform, she was a female student from one grade below, with blue

highlights in her hair.

The girl lowered herself in front of Heimbeere, tucking her silver hair behind her ear, and a spirited smile formed on her childish face.

“Just come with me for a bit, Mr. Heimbeere. Or should I say... ‘the mole.’”

“...”

Heimbeere, who had never been doubted in all these years...

Suddenly, his true identity was exposed, and he was restrained.

Waves of confusion and disbelief surged through him.

“Why... How did you... How did you figure it out!?”

T/N: A terrible mole if you give away your identity immediately

Chapter 82

Unconventional

/ Level 999 / By IX

With the restraining magic holding Professor Heimbeere captive, I immediately contacted the headmaster.

I requested several teachers to come and had them transport Professor Heimbeere to the headmaster's office as a suspect.

After binding Maiss to the restraining chair a while ago, now it was Heimbeere-sensei's turn to be tied up, and once again, the interrogation was about to begin in the headmaster's office.

"What... What is the meaning of this, teachers? What on earth have I done...!"

Professor Heimbeere, who was suddenly brought here, looked bewildered as he glanced at the surrounding teachers.

It was understandable.

It was so sudden, and he probably had no idea why he was being restrained.

There was hardly any evidence left, and he had been carrying out undercover activities for a long time.

In response to him, the headmaster cut straight to the chase.

"As a suspected member of the anti-magic organization Mistral, Heimbeere Sejiru, you are under suspicion."

“What!?”

“The presence of that organization is evident within the academy, and you are the primary suspect. I apologize, but until the investigation is complete, we will have to keep you restrained.”

“...”

Heimbeere-sensei’s... no, Heimbeere’s face turned pale instantly.

Immediately, he vigorously protested while struggling with his arms and legs.

“Why... Why all of a sudden...! Do you have any ‘proof’ that I am an undercover agent for Mistral!?”

Of course, everyone expected such a reaction.

Heimbeere had never left a trace of evidence, nor had he given any indication of his true nature.

Moreover, the fact that suspicions fell on long-time colleagues caused great turmoil among the teachers.

As a result, no one was able to answer Heimbeere’s question, and everyone’s gaze turned toward me.

Well, that’s to be expected. I proposed this operation from the beginning, so it’s better for me to explain from scratch.

With everyone’s eyes on me, Heimbeere also looked at me.

“You... You cast magic on me earlier... Do you know something?”

His eyes narrowed sharply, and a hint of anger could be seen.

It's natural to feel angry when suddenly subjected to restraining magic from behind.

Reluctantly, I stepped forward to explain.

“Do you know about the Probability Magic, ‘Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifure’?”

“‘Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifure’...?”

“In simple terms, it's a ‘Random Teleportation Magic.’ It's a teleportation magic where you can't choose the destination yourself, and usually, when ordinary people use it, they end up in a place they have no clue about or the teleportation fails.”

“I-I've never heard of such magic...? And how does that magic relate to the evidence that I am an undercover agent for Mistral?”

I can understand that it's hard to comprehend with just this information...

With the next words, I completely silenced the agitated Heimbeere.

“Because my Luck stat is 999, when I use ‘Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifure’... I can teleport to my ‘desired location.’”

“.....Huh?”

“I can reliably go to the place I currently want to go.”

Where you teleport to depends on luck.

Yes, it's a teleportation magic where luck determines everything.

In other words, as someone with a Luck stat maxed out at 999, when I

use this random teleportation magic, I can transform it into an unfair magic that reliably teleports me to the desired location.

“So, while thinking, ‘I want to go to the hideout of the Mistral infiltrators,’ I used this magic. And then, right before me, there was Professor Heimbeere...”

“T-That’s...! Is there really such a ridiculous method of finding a culprit?!”

Naturally, Heimbeere didn’t seem convinced and wore a stern expression.

Well, that’s the usual reaction.

When I proposed this operation to the headmaster and others, they were all taken aback too.

But in reality, when I, with a Luck stat of 999, use ‘Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifure,’ I can reliably go to the desired location.

As a side effect, it allows me to search for suspects as well.

“Just because of such a flimsy reason, you restrained me from behind!? There is not a shred of credibility!”

“But because Professor Heimbeere was there...”

“Just because ‘he was there’? Do you think that alone is evidence? And this talk about a Luck stat of 999 is just nonsense!”

But everything I said is true.

It seems that my explanation alone wasn’t enough to convince them.

“Headmaster Ananas! Are you going to blindly believe such careless words from a student? Are you going to trust the words of a first-year student who has been here for only a short time, rather than someone like me, who has been a pillar of the magic academy as a teacher for many years?”

Now the gaze shifted towards the headmaster.

Then, the headmaster stepped forward in my place and continued the explanation.

“However, the results of the appraisal of Sachi Malmurard’s magical essence have revealed that her Luck stat is abnormally high. Furthermore, we have already conducted verification of ‘Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifure’ and confirmed the extent of its freedom.”

“V-Verification...?”

“Well, it was a simple task. As you know, only teachers are allowed access to the storage room in the staff office, where the ‘test papers’ for the upcoming final exams are kept. The storage room is securely locked, and physical destruction is impossible due to my magic.”

“So, what does that have to do with anything...?”

Heimbeere looked wide-eyed, unable to grasp the intention of the explanation.

In response to him, the headmaster continued with a slightly proud expression.

“As part of the verification of Sachi’s random teleportation magic, she infiltrated that storage room. The commonly known teleportation magic, ‘Interstellar Leap,’ can only take you to places you have been to before, so it’s not a place students can normally access...”

The headmaster turned his gaze towards me, so I understood his

intention and took out a piece of paper from my pocket.

The ‘test paper’ intended for the upcoming final exams.

“Look, as you can see...”

“...”

“Of course, the verification didn’t stop there. Sachi was sent to a neighboring continent she had never been to before, and she brought back local specialty products. She even went to my hometown, a place Sachi couldn’t possibly know, and retrieved personal items for me. All of these experiments were successful.”

The headmaster coughed lightly and concluded the explanation.

“Based on the results of these verifications, it has been confirmed that Sachi’s ‘Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifure’ is a

‘super versatile’ teleportation magic that can reliably take her to the place she wants to go... It should be possible to locate the hiding place of Mistral if she so desires.”

“Th-That... Such a ridiculous magic...”

Heimbeere, once again, realized the frightening nature of ‘Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifure’ and trembled quietly.

Then, he cast a wary gaze at me, biting his lip.

“Of course, we haven’t concluded that you are definitely an undercover agent for Mistral based solely on this. We will now use a truth-telling magic on you to confirm whether you are an infiltrator. For now, it’s just a situation where suspicions have been raised. Please comply with our instructions, considering it as a way to prove your innocence.”

“...!”

Saying so, the headmaster walked up to Heimbeere and stood right in front of him.

Then, she raised her small right hand and began the incantation for the truth-telling magic, the same one she used on Maiss before.

“【Unnecessary Interrogation – The Opened Door of the Heart – This is a World Without Liars】...”

After finishing the incantation, she tried to activate the magic.

“The forgotten Oubliette...”

In an instant –

“Y-You piece of shi—!”

Heimbeere, bound to the restraining chair, forcibly moved his limbs and crushed the metal fittings with brute force.

An unexpectedly astonishing strength.

Although there was no sign of him using body enhancement magic, he displayed a strength that could be considered even greater, surprising the teachers.

Even the headmaster standing before him couldn't help but widen her eyes.

Amidst all of this, I alone...

“【Capricious Prank For'tuna】!”

Having sensed a unpleasant premonition in advance, I had already finished casting the magic.

“Guaah!”

The trap I set in case of such a situation struck Heimbeere accurately.

Once again, the restraining magic caused intense numbness throughout his body, and as he fell, the teachers rushed in to subdue him.

“I-I’m sorry, Sachi Malmurard...!”

“To think he would free himself from the restraints by his own power...!”

Then, looking down at the writhing Heimbeere on the ground, the headmaster muttered.

“This confirms it.”

The recent outburst of his actions was the most convincing evidence.

With confidence gained, the headmaster sharply narrowed her golden eyes as she lifted Heimbeere’s chin.

“You will spill all the information about Mistral... Heimbeere.”

Chapter 83

Anti-Magic Society

/ Level 999 / By IX

“【Unnecessary Interrogation – The Opened Doors of the Heart – A World Without Liars】 – 【The Forgotten Deception: Uvuri Factis】”

After restraining Heimbeere once again,

The interrogation using truth-extracting magic began in order to obtain information from Mistral.

The main things they wanted to know were Mistral’s “objectives” and “future actions,” as well as information about their “members” and “weapons” they possess.

They also wanted information about Mistral’s hideout.

Technically, I could use my 【Selfish Summoning Arian Shifre】 to locate it, but it would be faster to ask.

By the way, according to Heimbeere, there are no other traitors besides himself, so he is the only valuable source of information.

While the school principal, a few teachers, and I waited in silence, Heimbeere, with a vacant expression, began speaking in a lifeless voice.

“Our objective is to overthrow the magical nation and change the common sense of magical supremacy.”

“Change common sense?”

“To overturn the common belief that only magical talent can measure individuals. That is the ultimate goal of Mistral.”

Mistral, an organization formed by those dissatisfied with the current magical supremacy, has gathered.

I had a vague understanding that they were the bad guys trying to destroy the magical nation, but it was the first time I heard that they had such thoughts.

How exactly do they plan to change common sense?

“Magical talent is the very value of a human being. In this country, any other power is completely disregarded, and only magical power values and the nature of magical elements serve as individuals’ indicators. The citizens have already been

poisoned by this way of thinking, and recently, even other countries have started actively adopting magical technology.

Before the world is contaminated by this absurd ideology, Mistral will change the common sense.”

Despite being in a more tightly restrained state than before, Heimbeere couldn’t help but reveal a smile from the depths of his heart due to the influence of the truth-extracting magic.

“If we can achieve the overthrow of the magical nation, the world will also change its perspective on magic. They will realize that magical talent is unnecessary.”

“Then, how do you plan to actually change the current common sense? Magical talent is the very value of a human being. I don’t mean to go that far, but the convenience and military value of magic have been demonstrated for hundreds of years and have deep roots in human history. I don’t think Mistral can make any meaningful impact at this point.”

As if voicing everyone’s question, the school principal asked, and

Heimbeere, with a creepy smile, answered in a completely different manner from when he was hiding his identity.

“Soon, a ‘large-scale invasion’ will take place.”

“Invasion?”

“A massive invasion using hordes of magical beasts. Frenzied magical beasts will assail people, targeting the capital city of the magical nation, Blossom.”

Heimbeere continued, becoming increasingly confident and fervent.

Heimbeere’s malicious laughter echoed through the room, causing everyone present to furrow their brows in discomfort. Even the school principal, with a hint of disgust on his face, shrugged in disbelief.

“So, your plan is to send hordes of magical beasts into the town, let them trample over the magicians, and then Mistral takes care of those beasts on their behalf. By doing so, the position of those foolish and sluggish magicians who relied solely on magic will be undermined, and we will establish ourselves as the new common sense of humanity!”

As the principal voiced the question on everyone’s mind, he replied with an eerie smile: “We will achieve it through a

‘magical device.’ All of Mistral’s plans will be executed using magical devices. We will outsmart the magicians who are obsessed with magical talent and negate their existence through knowledge and research.”

Upon hearing this, the teachers around me became slightly restless. Magical devices. Indeed, if that were the case, it wouldn’t be impossible to achieve something beyond common sense. Besides, if they were relying on anything, it would most likely be magical devices.

“Magical devices are not for magicians but for non-magicians,” I recalled the words of my senior, Pita Ja, from the Magical Device Research Club. It is generally believed that magical devices have limitations and can only assist people to a certain extent in their daily lives. There are also those who underestimate the significance of magical devices.

However, it is said that there are rare occurrences where magical devices can surpass magic itself and achieve extraordinary things. If Mistral has succeeded in creating such magical devices, it might be possible for them to incite the magical beasts towards the capital.

“Hmm?”

Magical beasts rampaging in the capital city?

Wait, haven't I heard something like that before...?

As I felt a nagging sensation in the back of my mind, Heimbeere continued, interrupting my thoughts: “To achieve that, we have conducted numerous experiments. We have researched magical devices that induce aggression in magical beasts and have already completed magical devices that weaken the magical elements of magicians. Soon, we will witness a scene where frenzied magical beasts run rampant in the capital city while weakened magicians are trampled upon. And all of this is thanks to me infiltrating the academy and conducting experiments with these devices!”

“The aggression of the magical beasts and the weakening of magician's magical elements...”

Once again, everyone was taken aback, their eyes widening in realization.

During the final exams, some students experienced magical element impairments in the Uncharted Forest, rendering their magic ineffective. Additionally, there were reports of unnatural aggression among the magical beasts in the forest, causing several students to be unable to complete the exams as planned.

Similar incidents occurred during the entrance exams, where reports indicated that the magical beasts were more aggressive than anticipated. Professor Lezan, who was serving as an examiner, had speculated about Mistral's involvement based on these observations.

The exact cause of these incidents remained unknown.

However, from Heimbeere's statement, it was now certain that Mistral was involved in the "aggression of magical beasts" and the "weakening of magical elements."

I never imagined that they were behind these incidents.

"You mean... it was your doing that students couldn't complete their academy assignments and complained of feeling unwell...? The entrance exams... and the incidents before that... When did you start planning such absurd things?" The school principal's voice grew unusually rough, causing the tension among the teachers to intensify. Caught up in the atmosphere, I held my breath, and Heimbeere responded to the principal's question.

The answer he gave made me question my own ears.

"We have been preparing for a long time. This plan began twelve years ago, with the 'magical beast invasion of the capital city, Blossom'."

".....Huh?"

The one who let out a voice of surprise was me.

He seemed to answer casually, thinking it was nothing.

The school principal and the others didn't seem particularly shocked; they only wore slightly surprised expressions.

But for me, upon learning this fact from him, my heart felt like it was

pounding painfully.

Twelve years ago? A magical beast invasion of the capital city?

“H-Hold on a second...”

“Hmm?”

“Did you just say a ‘magical beast invasion of the capital city, Blossom’? Does that mean...?”

I couldn’t help but ask for clarification, and the surrounding teachers looked at me with curiosity.

I was too preoccupied to pay attention to their gaze; I was feeling an intense sense of anxiety.

Unaware of the stern expression on my face, Heimbeere returned a perplexed look.

“Even at your age, you should surely know about it. The catastrophic incident that occurred in the capital city... referred to as the ‘Great Disaster.’ We, Mistral, were responsible for that magical beast calamity.”

“...”

Hearing it again from Heimbeere, I was left speechless.

The shocking truth he revealed caused my voice to tremble silently.

“That’s... that’s not possible, right...? Because, if that’s true, then that person was just...”

“Did something happen, Sachi? What do you mean by the ‘Great

Disaster'? What happened, exactly?"

Echoing in my mind was the familiar voice of my "beloved mentor."

"It really happened, the Great Disaster," I murmured.

Around ten years ago, it was my benefactor who rescued me from the Glaciel family's exile, deep within the dark forest.

They were also my mentor who taught me magic and the family that raised me with kindness.

Magician Marbury Malmurard.

As I recalled my beloved mentor, I trembled at the revealed truth.

"Rare legendary-level magical beasts swarmed into the capital city of Blossom, something rarely seen. The cause remains unknown. And because it was unknown, as a magician living in the capital, I became the target of suspicion,"

Mulbury stated.

Malbury had the ability to hear the voice of magical elements and was feared as a magician who brought calamity.

Following the Great Disaster, she became trapped within the "Forest of Sinners," a cage of sorts. To set Malbury free, I decided to strive to become a National Mage.

I believed that by gaining recognition and establishing myself as a National Mage, people would listen to my voice.

Malbury was not a bad person. The idea that magicians were the source of calamity was just a superstition. The Great Disaster in the capital city was merely an unfortunate accident.

But it wasn't that simple.

In the first place, it wasn't a coincidence or a calamity. The true culprit...

"Everything... all of it!"

Unable to contain my anger, I instinctively grabbed Heimbeere by the collar, fixing him with a sharp gaze while clenching my teeth.

"W-What's the matter, Sachi Malmurard!? Why are you suddenly...?"

"The Great Disaster caused twelve years ago...! There was a 'magician' suspected as the cause and imprisoned in the Forest of Sinners...! You know about it, don't you!?"

This question may not have had much significance.

But I couldn't help but ask.

Heimbeere, who seemed lost in thought, widened his eyes upon hearing my question. Immediately after, he burst into laughter.

"Bwahaha! Oh yeah, there was someone like that."

"...!"

"A female magician who became the 'hidden scapegoat' for Mistral. She was a masterpiece! We orchestrated everything, yet she was treated as the culprit without permission. The townsfolk unleashed a storm of condemnation. It was so hard to hold back my laughter on the sidelines!"

Heimbeere's vulgar laughter echoed in my ears.

At the same time, an image of Marbury's sorrowful face flashed through my mind, and an unfamiliar emotion began to bud within me.

'I couldn't help but feel so lonely being alone in this forest.'

Chapter 84

A Single Determination

[1 Comment](#) / [Level 999](#) / By [IX](#)

Mulbury-san had experienced all the suffering because of Mistral.

As anger gathered in my right fist, I swung it towards the man in front of me.

However...

“...”

I lowered my fist and released my grip from Heimbeere's collar.

Even if I were to punch him here, it wouldn't solve anything.

My anger wouldn't subside either.

Let's stop this futile action.

Moreover, this is rather the best “news” for both Mulbury-san and me.

“Aren't you gonna punch me?” he said.

“...”

Heimbeere turned towards me with a vulgar smile, finding it amusing.

Without reacting to that, I turned towards the bewildered school principal and teachers, and I bowed my head.

“I apologize for interrupting the conversation.”

“N-No, it’s fine...”

The school principal and other teachers looked at me with puzzled faces.

However, without making eye contact, I fell silent, and sensing the atmosphere, they didn’t ask any further questions.

The school principal cleared his throat and spoke.

“So, let’s get back on track. We understand that you guys are plotting to overthrow the country using magical tools.

Now, tell us the specific date and time of the plan’s initiation.”

Upon being asked, Heimbeere, in a dazed state once again, replied.

“The exact date hasn’t been determined.”

“What...?”

“I’ve heard that the final adjustments for the tools to be used in the plan are taking time. However, we’ve been informed that the adjustments will be completed within one month from today, and the plan will be put into action.”

Within one month.

Upon hearing that critical timeframe, the teachers collectively gasped, realizing the severity of the situation.

They hadn’t expected it to become so urgent.

Thinking about how if Heimbeere hadn't revealed this information, they would have been taken by surprise with the invasion of magical beasts, it sent shivers down their spines.

"We have one month. We need to gather our forces and strike first before the plan is executed," the school principal said.

The teachers nodded in agreement with the school principal's words.

At that moment...

Knock, knock, knock.

Suddenly, the door of the school principal's office was knocked, and a voice claiming to be a National Mage was heard from the other side.

It seemed that members of the National Mage Union had arrived.

They were the people called by the school principal to take custody of Heimbeere.

"Let's leave the further questioning to them. You have to tell them everything you know about the organization's members, hiding places, means of communication with Mistral, and past crimes. Be prepared for sleepless nights for at least two days," the school principal said.

Just like during Maris's time, Heimbeere was taken away by the National Mages.

Afterward, the remaining National Mages shared the information they had gathered so far.

Upon hearing it, we all wore bitter expressions and collectively scratched our heads.

"So, Mistral's plan will be set in motion within a month, huh? We

would like to attack their hiding place before that and neutralize the organization. However, with just one month, time is...,” one of the male mages said.

“How many National Mages dispatched by the government are still available?” the school principal asked.

Thinking for a moment, one of the male mages frowned and answered, “Currently, half of the National Mages are abroad, engaged in exploring uncharted territories and subduing specially designated magical beasts.”

“Nearly half, huh? We would want to mobilize them immediately, but it would take at least a week to notify those abroad. Depending on the missions they have, they might not be available for two or three months,” the school principal continued with a grim expression.

There simply wasn’t enough time. The school principal’s face contorted.

Bringing back the National Mages who were abroad seemed to be quite challenging.

Well, it couldn’t be helped since it happened all of a sudden.

“This is primarily due to the delay on the school’s side in realizing the presence of infiltrators... In other words, it’s my fault as the school principal. I truly apologize,” the school principal said.

“That goes for us teachers as well. We had a traitor among our colleagues, and for years, we couldn’t even notice their existence,” another teacher added.

The National Mages also seemed apologetic for their inability to catch Mistral’s tail until now.

It was proof of how adept they were at hiding their presence.

That's why it was necessary to prevent them from acting as they pleased and stop their plan of the magical beast invasion in advance.

How about using random teleportation magic to launch a sudden attack on Mistral's hiding place? Or maybe I could teleport directly to their leader and capture them all at once?

'No...'

They had mysterious magical tools in abundance.

Among them, there might be ones that hindered or neutralized my magic. It would be better to avoid rash frontal assaults.

In the worst-case scenario, if my surprise attack failed and their plan leaked to our side, we would miss this golden opportunity.

It was safer to gather our forces and attack prudently.

With that in mind, I looked at the contemplative school principal and teachers and raised my hand.

"Um, um...,

"Hmm?"

"May I suggest something? Can I try gathering the National Mages?"

"Sachi...?"

The school principal immediately understood and was taken aback by my sudden proposal. However, the National Mages, who hadn't heard much about me yet, tilted their heads in confusion.

One of the male mages looked at the school principal and asked, "By

the way, who is she...? I heard she's one of the students who has been helping with this incident, but..."

"Sachi Malmurard. An extraordinary mage with a Luck stat of 999."

"L-Luck stat...?"

The National Mages furrowed their brows, puzzled by what they were hearing.

Leaving them aside, I continued, planning to explain to them as well.

"With my teleportation magic, 'Selfish Summoning Aryan Shiftle,' I can teleport regardless of the distance between me and the target. I can go to places I've never been to and meet people I've never met. So, I can inform the National Mages about this matter and assist with some of the tasks they have. With that, can we bring back some of them within the given time frame?"

"..."

The National Mages, who didn't know about my abilities, were left speechless in disbelief.

While looking at their reactions, the school principal, with a hint of gratitude, responded to me.

"That would be incredibly helpful, but it would impose a significant burden on you."

"I also want to prevent Mistral's plan and neutralize them by any means necessary. I'm willing to assist in any way possible."

The cooperation of the National Mages was crucial to prevent the upcoming magical beast invasion. If I could achieve that with a little strain, it would be worth it.

Understanding my determination, the school principal lowered her head and said to me, apologetically, “Sachi Malmurard, you have been a tremendous help in every aspect. Once this matter is resolved, I promise to fulfill one of your wishes. Please think about it.”

“Y-Yes...”

Granting one of my wishes through the school principal’s authority... I didn’t expect her to go that far, but since she offered, maybe I should consider something.

As I secretly pondered my wish in the corner of my mind, the school principal’s expression clouded, and she sighed.

“However, even if we manage to gather some National Mages, we still lack sufficient manpower.”

Other teachers seemed to be thinking the same, nodding in agreement.

In the first place, we couldn’t be sure if mobilizing the full force of the nation would be enough. Even if I managed to bring back a few National Mages with my assistance, it wouldn’t be enough to fully replenish our forces.

“A raiding party to attack Mistral and a defense force to protect the capital in case of any emergencies. These will be essential. Moreover, considering the scale of the magical beast invasion, comparable to a major disaster recorded in history, we need more powerful individuals equivalent to National Mages to form both teams.”

The school principal and teachers fell silent, wearing troubled expressions.

At that moment, the male National Mage who had been speechless finally regained his composure and made a suggestion.

“If we gather mercenaries who are practicing magic without national certification, it can provide some additional combat power. However,

it might be less reliable than bringing back the National Mages who are already out on missions.”

“Well, they have no obligations or responsibilities. At most, we can rely on them for defending the capital.”

Requesting support from other countries was also deemed unrealistic and rejected. It seemed that it would take too much time and effort, and it wouldn’t be feasible.

Hence, everyone was deeply contemplating where to find the additional manpower.

Surprisingly, one of the National Mages provided an unexpected answer.

“How about borrowing help from the ‘students’?”

“What...?”

The school principal and the teachers furrowed their brows.

The male National Mage, who was once a student himself, explained his intention to everyone.

“Of course, I don’t mean all the students. We can select those with extensive combat experience and exceptional combat abilities and request their assistance. I’ve heard that the current students at the academy are highly skilled mages, so they should be able to supplement our forces sufficiently.”

“...?”

The school principal bit her lip, contemplating the proposition. It seemed that she still felt reluctant to expose the students to danger. As someone responsible for the academy, she didn’t want to recklessly endanger the students.

While they were occasionally assigned to handle magical beast subjugation through academy requests, the current situation carried far greater risks.

It was understandable that the school principal hesitated. However, there didn't seem to be any other viable options.

With a reluctant nod, he responded.

“...Indeed, it seems we have no other choice.”

To compensate for the lack of manpower, we would rely on the students at the magical academy. It was a bit dangerous, but it seemed to be the only feasible option.

“However, we won't force them. We will ask for their cooperation. If they refuse, we will accept it gracefully. For now, I intend to approach the specially designated students from each grade and some third-year students.”

While the school principal continued his discussion, I raised my hand once again.

“Um, Principal. Can I also participate in the operation on that day?”

“In fact, I wanted to ask you for that. And if possible, I'd like you to join as a member of the raiding party rather than the defense force. You've already proven yourself to be a mage equivalent to a National Mage. Of course, I won't force you...”

“No, I'd be happy to help in that capacity.”

Being assigned to the unit that would launch an assault on Mistral's hideout... It was an assignment I had hoped for. I needed to directly infiltrate their hideout and extract the “evidence.” The definitive proof that Mistral was responsible for the disaster twelve years ago.

‘Mulbury-san...’

It was infuriating that Mulbury-san was imprisoned in the Forest of Sinners because of Mistral. However, conversely, if I could obtain that evidence, it would prove Mulbury-san's innocence.

I had planned to become a National Mage, raise my reputation, and assert that Mulbury-san was not guilty. But now, an opportunity to grant that wish had come sooner than expected.

That's why this was the best news for both Mulbury-san and me.

Finally, I would be able to free Mulbury-san from the Accused Forest.

I would find the evidence with my own hands.

That's why being assigned to the raiding party was truly fortunate.

Above all...

'...Don't think you can get away with making Mulbury-san sad for free.'

I wanted to personally crush detestable Mistral. It was a genuine desire that originated from deep within me.

Before the excitement of the Starry Blossom festival faded away, a new determination ignited within me.

Chapter 85

Parental Heart

/ Level 999 / By IX

In the palace conference room of the capital city of Blossom, King Ferum Galan and numerous national magicians had gathered. Engaged in discussions around a long table, they exchanged ideas while occasionally sparking arguments and raising their voices, creating a tense atmosphere.

And rightfully so, as the current agenda involved strategizing the operation to suppress the anti-magic organization Mistral, which posed a threat to the magical nation. This wasn't a topic that could be addressed with cheerful vibes.

With the location of the group's hideout discovered, everyone was determined not to let this opportunity slip by.

Quietly observing from a perch by the window in the conference room was an owl.

(Things seem to be getting quite serious...)

This owl was none other than a government messenger owl. Magician Mulberry Malmurard covertly observed the tense situation through the owl's senses.

Seeking to check on her apprentice, Sachi, who had ventured out of the Accused Forest, Mulberry was disappointed that the highly anticipated Starflower Festival had been abruptly canceled due to a rogue incident. It was an unfortunate timing, especially when Sachi's Class A was on the verge of victory.

In addition to the festival's cancellation, matters escalated further, hinting at a potential conflict with the anti-magic organization Mistral.

(Overcoming the organization and preventing magical beast incursion...) Apparently, Mistral was planning to launch an attack using magical beasts on the capital. The current mission aimed to quell the organization while stopping the magical beast invasion. Information from an insider suggested that the expected damage could match or exceed the scale of the “Great Calamity” that struck the capital twelve years ago.

According to the informant’s confession, it appeared that Mistral intentionally triggered the Great Calamity. Although the nation remained skeptical due to the lack of conclusive evidence, Mulberry, whose life had been disrupted by that catastrophe, watched the meeting with a personal stake in the matter.

(Perhaps, if we can gather decisive evidence that links Mistral to the Great Calamity through this operation...) Having been suspected as the source of disaster, Mulberry, the accused magician, contemplated the possibility of being released from the Accused Forest. The citizens found solace by attributing the chaos caused by an unknown catastrophe to magicians. If evidence from Mistral could prove them responsible for the Great Calamity, suspicions against magicians could be alleviated.

However, there was one major issue...

(...Jealousy, that’s an insurmountable hurdle.)

The fact remained that Mulberry, accused as the source of calamity, was imprisoned in the Accused Forest. Behind this reality lurked the undeniable “jealousy” of many national magicians. Magicians possessed the unique ability to interpret the voice of magic and create new incantations for spells, making them the sole creators of magic. They were, in essence, magic inventors.

Consequently, there were more than a few who envied this talent, and with the public’s suspicion focused on magicians as the cause of the unknown calamity, several national magicians seized the opportunity to incite Mulberry’s confinement, recognizing it as a chance to advance their own positions.

Even at that time, twelve years ago, Mulberry had already realized that magicians were being manipulated by the jealousy of their peers, leading to their suspicion as the cause of the disaster.

(Even if we obtain evidence that Mistral triggered the Great Calamity, they could still manipulate public perception with various excuses.)

Mulberry sighed silently within the owl's body, believing that even if they acquired evidence that Mistral caused the disaster, the nation might still be swayed by misinformation.

Mulberry didn't just harbor an aversion to the confinement in that isolated space; above all, it was disheartening to think that all the effort Sachi was putting into liberating Mulberry might go to waste. Sachi aimed to become the world's strongest national magician and prove that Mulberry wasn't the source of disaster. It was a noble intention, and Sachi's talents made it an achievable goal.

Yet, the likelihood of opposition was high. The hierarchy among national magicians, known as the "Magician Sequence,"

resulted in significant differences in treatment based on their ranks. Many national magicians who didn't wish for Mulberry's release existed, which made it uncertain if Sachi's wish would be fulfilled, even if she became the world's strongest national magician.

(I don't want to see Sachi-chan sad anymore, so I must find a way to handle this.) As Mulberry pondered, memories of Sachi during the Starflower Festival resurfaced.

(She seemed angry...I think that's the first time I've seen her like that.) Spending nearly a decade together without witnessing her angry side was quite a remarkable story. Well, Sachi was surrounded by happiness, which seemed to dispel any of my own misfortunes. Hence, her surroundings were always filled with smiles.

For the first time, I saw an expression of anger on Sachi's face. Even from my spot in the corner of the venue, her intensity was clearly conveyed.

(Perhaps she was friends with that person?)

The girl with light brown hair who had been injured by the rogue participant. Given that her friend was hurt, it made sense that Sachi, usually gentle, displayed such fury.

(It's reassuring to see that she's properly being a "student.")

While the unfortunate incident concerned the injury of her friend, Mulberry was deeply relieved to learn that Sachi had friends. Mulberry had been alone for a long time and never had anyone she could call a friend. It made her smile internally, akin to a parental feeling, thinking that it was a good decision to send her to the magic academy.

Two weeks had passed since the capture of Heimbeere, the informant for Mistral. The preparations for the operation to suppress Mistral were progressing steadily. I flew around assisting in gathering national magicians as part of the forces, while Headmistress Ananas reached out to students who were likely to participate in the operation. Thanks to this effort, it seemed that a reasonable force had been assembled, and today, a strategy meeting was scheduled to take place in the royal court of the capital.

By the way, I had been granted leave from the academy during the time spent gathering forces. Similarly, the students participating in the Mistral suppression operation were also given leave on the day of the operation. The idea was to maintain the appearance of regular classes at the academy to avoid alerting Mistral to the progress of the suppression operation.

Using the spell "[Selfish Summon: Ariane Shifre]," I checked around the capital for any remnants of Mistral, but I didn't find anything, so it seemed that worry could be put to rest.

"Alright, shall we get going, Mil?"

On the day of the meeting, Mil, who had been summoned for this operation, and I decided to head to the royal court of the capital. While other students were headed from the dormitory to the academy, our path was quite different, almost as if it carried a sense of forbidden excitement. It felt somewhat like we were playing hooky, but it wasn't something lighthearted.

Thinking such things, as I made my way toward the entrance, I noticed Mil sitting on her bed, engrossed in something.

“...Mil? Is something wrong?”

“Oh, no, it's nothing.”

Mil, who had been staring intently at an “information list” handed over by the National Magician Union, stood up in a fluster.

She had already gathered as much information as possible from Heimbeere about the organization's members and details regarding their magical tools. This information had been compiled into a list, distributed to all those participating in the operation. Had she found something of interest within that list?

“Could it be that you're nervous? Well, no matter how much you read, I don't think being cautious is a bad thing, so I understand your feelings,” I said.

“Well, um, yes,” Mil replied, her response seeming somewhat unsure. I had assumed that she was reading the list with nerves running high. She had faced school exams and even the major event, the Starflower Festival, up until now.

However, this Mistral suppression operation carried a distinct and unusual sense of urgency, unlike anything she had experienced before.

The consequences of failure could lead to the downfall of the capital, and even the magical nation itself. It was a critical situation. That's why I had thought Mil, who was timid by nature, would be extremely nervous at this point. Yet, it seemed she was preoccupied by

something else...

I didn't know exactly what that was, but for now, I decided to lighten the mood and say something obvious.

"It's a bit late, but thanks for joining, Mil."

"Huh? Why is Sachi-san thanking me?"

"I really want this Mistral suppression operation to succeed personally. Mil, your participation makes me feel a lot more confident about it."

As I continued, I thought about my benefactor.

"Even though you weren't obligated to join and you still chose to be part of this, it's very reassuring... So, thank you."

"I-It's not really something that requires thanks..."

Mil, who had agreed to the operation at the request of the headmistress, must have felt uncomfortable receiving gratitude from me. Especially considering her modest self-esteem.

But individuals with magical potential as high as Mil's weren't common, even among the national magicians. There were few as reliable as her in terms of strength. Apparently, she was going to be assigned to one of the attack teams just like me, which was another comforting factor.

In response to that, Mil shook her head modestly, then suddenly cast a shadow on her face and muttered.

"Also, I have a bit of a 'reason' related to Mistral."

“Huh?”

A reason?

After saying that, Mil passed by me and stood in front of the entrance door.

“Well then, shall we go, Sachi-san?”

“Ah, yeah... That’s right.”

Mil’s muttered words piqued my curiosity, but somehow, I felt hesitant about asking for clarification.

So, without further questions, I put on my shoes and both of us headed out through the entrance.

And then, in order to participate in the suppression operation meeting, Mil and I left the dormitory and headed towards the royal court of the capital.

Chapter 86

Suppression Operation

/ Level 999 / By IX

Mil and I visited the royal court to participate in the conference for the Mistral Suppression Operation.

Inside the court, a grand hall often used for events like dances was already filled with numerous magicians.

Besides us, there were others wearing the uniforms of the magical academy. As evident from the red accents, all of them were third-year students.

Especially experienced and accomplished third-year students were summoned to assist in this operation.

“Speaking of third-year students, aren’t they supposed to join the defense team instead of the assault team?”

“Yes, that’s right. Because of that, they could assign skillful national magicians to the assault team. That’s the strategy.”

Indeed, if they could allocate so many national magicians to the assault team without taking away from the defense team, it would become a dependable force. By entrusting the defense of the capital city to the students, a strong defensive formation could be established.

According to some rumors, if the students suffered significant casualties on the assault team’s side, it would reflect poorly on the national magicians, which might be why they were kept in the background. After all, the defense team’s main role was to act as insurance for when Mistral used its magical tools for beast invasions during dire situations, and the possibility of actual combat was low.

“Speaking of which, what about the special scholarship students other than Mil? I’ve heard they’re on par with the national magicians in terms of skill. Like, the Student Council President who attracted attention at the Starflower Festival...”

“That would be Crossgri Travaillé, the third-year special scholarship student. Also, her younger brother, Carant Travaillé, a second-year special scholarship student. Both of them seem to be joining the defense team. They were summoned by the Headmaster to his office together recently, and I heard it from them.”

As we were having that conversation, we saw figures that seemed to fit the description making their way towards where the third-year students had gathered.

A tall, black-haired girl with short hair.

A similarly short-haired boy with a pale complexion.

Compared to the girl who gave off a glamorous impression, the boy’s eyes were obscured by his bangs, giving him a darker aura.

So that’s Crossgri and her brother Carant. We didn’t see much of Carant during the Starflower Festival, but he must be quite skilled to be chosen as a special scholarship student.

Why do I not remember him much? Crossgri, the user of non-incantation magic, was quite prominent during the Starflower Festival and received a lot of attention.

“Carant apparently has a very timid personality and didn’t participate in most of the events during the Starflower Festival, despite being a special scholarship student. He was afraid of causing trouble and being a burden.”

“Oh, I see...”

Contrary to his confident sister, Crossgri, Carant seemed to have a completely different personality.

However, their abilities were undoubtedly impressive. With the two of them present, the defense of the capital city would be much more secure. At the very least, they should be able to buy enough time until the national magicians from the assault team returned to the capital city.

“Well, I think we should get started soon.”

While we were discussing this, all the participants had gathered in the grand hall, and the strategy meeting was about to begin.

On a platform at the back of the hall, a handsome young man with neat, chestnut-colored hair stepped forward.

He seemed to be in his mid-twenties.

With his healthy complexion and the aristocratic-style black coat that draped over his lean figure, he gave off an air of nobility.

Though I had helped assemble the national magicians during expeditions, I didn't recognize him.

As he ascended the platform, a hush fell over the magicians.

Looking out at them from the platform, the man cleared his throat before speaking.

“For those who don't know me, I'm Verge Galan, a national magician. If there are any unfamiliar names, I'd be delighted if you could remember mine from this point on.”

Upon hearing that name, several magicians audibly gasped in surprise. Mil and I shared a startled glance, unable to believe it ourselves.

Surely, there wasn't anyone among the magicians who didn't know this person's name. Even I knew it.

The "Mage Rank," the benchmark for national magicians. A true prodigy magician hailed as the ultimate genius, who had held the top position for nearly a decade and was considered the greatest of all time.

Moreover, he was a bona fide prince, bearing the blood of King Ferum Galan, the ruler of the magical nation Orchid.

Ranked first in the Mage Rank—Verge Galan.

Was this person truly the national magician often referred to as the strongest in the modern era?

With his appearance, the atmosphere in the room underwent a drastic change.

There were those who looked at him with envy, those frozen in shock, and those filled with jealousy. However, the most common reaction was the evident tension shown on the faces of the gathered individuals.

It wasn't that they were overwhelmed by Verge's presence, but rather the realization of the gravity of the situation, knowing they had to convene such a notable figure.

"In this operation, I have been entrusted with the role of commanding from the position of the top-ranked national magician. Such opportunities are rare, so I might have some inexperience, but I hope you'll be understanding."

Verge's humble demeanor shifted as he continued, surveying the audience.

"Now, before we proceed with reviewing the operation details, I'd like to address some of your concerns."

As everyone wore puzzled expressions, Verge continued.

“With so many national magicians gathered, it’s not unreasonable to worry that Mistral might become aware of our movements. In fact, this potential danger has been raised a few times before the strategy meeting. But rest assured.”

In that instant, I felt Verge’s azure eyes briefly glance in my direction.

I couldn’t help but shiver in response.

Did he know about me?

If so, then he must be planning to mention it.

“Thanks to the cooperation of Headmaster Ananas Crostata of the Royal Harvest Magic Academy and ‘one particular student,’ it’s already been proven that there are no remnants or associates of Mistral within the capital. That student exposed the mole who had infiltrated the academy, providing us with reliable information. You can trust that there’s very little risk of the operation leaking to Mistral.”

A moment later, something akin to a relieved murmur spread through the room.

Mil, who was beside me, seemed to immediately realize that the mentioned student was me, and she sent a look of admiration my way.

Even though I hadn’t been directly named, it was still somewhat embarrassing to be publicly recognized like this.

Before and after assisting with the summoning of the national magicians, I used the spell “Whimsical Summon Arian Shifre” to confirm the absence of Mistral remnants within the capital.

I also employed the same magic to ensure there were no observers monitoring the capital or any potential threats leaking information to Mistral. Given the lack of reaction, concerns in these areas were deemed unnecessary.

It appeared that Headmaster Ananas had already informed Verge about these measures.

“Now, let’s reconfirm the details of the operation. This mission is aimed at thwarting Mistral, an anti-magic organization, in their plan to launch a beast invasion, and to suppress the organization itself. Thanks to the information provided by their insider, Heimbeere, we already know the location of their hideout. Our goal is to lead as much force as possible and launch a swift assault.”

The hideout’s location is far to the south, situated in the realm of magical beasts between here and the Farm Kingdom.

It’s a vast forest inhabited by troublesome magical beasts. As long as you don’t approach them, they won’t pose a threat. However, since the forest offers nothing beneficial to humans, nobody ever goes there.

Within this unnamed “Fruitless Forest,” Mistral’s hideout exists. Like a disguise for the forest, there’s a sprawling labyrinth underground, and it seems Mistral uses it as a research facility and a hideout.

To verify the accuracy of Heimbeere’s information, I performed reconnaissance using my spell “Whimsical Summon Arian Shifre.” I did find what appeared to be the underground labyrinth, so there should be no mistake in the information.

“The entrance to the underground labyrinth is located to the north and south. Our plan involves blocking these entrances, cornering Mistral’s members from the surface down to the depths, and apprehending them all. Therefore, I’ve divided the gathered magicians into two teams.”

The Northern Assault Team attacking from the north entrance and the

Southern Assault Team attacking from the south entrance. They intended to split into two groups, capturing every member of Mistral.

“I, Verge Galan, will be in command of the Northern Assault Team. On the contrary, the Southern Assault Team will be led by Shan Galan, the second-ranked magician in the Mage Rank. Due to the balance of abilities and ease of coordination, we have already assigned team members on our end. Please take a look at the materials being distributed to determine which team you’ll be on.”

At that moment, a magician began distributing documents to everyone.

Mil and I received the documents as well. They contained the names and abilities of the team members, along with their assigned teams. I quickly looked for my own name.

“The Northern Assault Team, huh...”

“Oh, I’m on it too.”

Mil and I exchanged smiles upon realizing we were in the same team.

It was reassuring to have a close friend among the national magicians, especially when surrounded by those who were already significantly older.

After a while, with the exception of those who would be part of the defense team, the national magicians had been divided into the Northern Assault Team and the Southern Assault Team.

Amidst the experienced national magicians, I found myself looking toward Verge Galan on the platform.

Joining the Northern Assault Team meant I would be assisting in the assault operation under Verge’s command. On the other hand, Shan Galan, the magician ranked second, would lead the Southern Assault Team, standing beside the platform.

If I remembered correctly, Shan Galan was Verge's older brother. Like Verge, he came from the royal bloodline, making him the first prince in line for the throne due to his position as the eldest sibling.

While their facial features and builds did share similarities, Shan had a much sharper gaze.

"You're lucky to be with Verge."

"Don't say things like that."

Mil and I exchanged a quiet conversation, but it seemed Verge noticed that the team members had finished confirming each other's identities, prompting him to continue.

"Now that you've seen your team members' faces, let's go over the flow of the operation once again before we proceed."

Thus, we received another explanation from Verge about the course of the suppression operation.

Chapter 87

Return to Everyday Life

/ [Level 999](#) / By [IX](#)

The plan's content took the following form:

Both the Northern Assault Team and the Southern Assault Team would attack from the respective entrances in the north and south. While driving the Mistral group downward, they would attempt to destroy the "Mana Contraction Device"

believed to be located within their hideout.

These individuals possess the "Mana Contraction Device," a magical tool that obstructs the function of mana, making it difficult for magicians to fight effectively within the hideout, just like during that

incident during the end-of-term examination.

“Some students experienced abnormalities in their mana, causing them to become unwell.”

It seemed to be an incident caused by Mistral, and the magical tool used for it was set up within their hideout.

Therefore, in order to subdue Mistral, the destruction of the “Mana Contraction Device” was the fundamental prerequisite. Conversely, since the troublesome obstacle was only that, if the destruction of the “Mana Contraction Device” was achieved, Mistral’s defeat was inevitable.

“The ‘Mana Contraction Device’ appears as an object resembling a jar. It emits toxic smoke synthesized from the venom of plant-type magical beasts. The toxicity of the smoke is primarily influenced by the size of mana—magical potency.

This can lead to magic either not being cast normally or being significantly weakened.”

To disseminate the toxic smoke throughout the entire hideout, it was placed on the third level of the underground labyrinth, which is considered the middle layer.

If it could be destroyed, victory on our side would essentially be assured. After that, within the now safe underground labyrinth, the Mistral members would be neutralized, and the magical tools used for the beast incursion would be destroyed, bringing about a definitive conclusion.

“Upon the destruction of the ‘Mana Contraction Device,’ prompt Mistral’s surrender. However, if they resist without heeding our words, we’ll have no choice but to attempt neutralization through force.”

That roughly summarized the strategy meeting.

And now, our assault teams were finally preparing to depart toward Mistral's hideout.

To conserve mana as much as possible, they arranged eight carriages at the carriage station, with each team splitting into four groups for movement. While waiting for our turn to board a carriage with Mil, I decided to go over the plan details again.

"So, the Northern and Southern Assault Teams will each invade from their respective entrances and aim to destroy the

'Mana Contraction Device'?"

"Yeah, because without that, we won't be able to fight effectively in the underground labyrinth."

Even with skilled national magicians gathered, they couldn't fully control Mistral with mana acting up. So, to get the magicians back in top condition, it was essential to start with destroying the "Mana Contraction Device."

I conveyed this point to Mil once more, and she furrowed her brows skeptically before speaking.

"If it's you, Sachi, couldn't you use that random teleportation magic to instantly teleport to the location of the 'Mana Contraction Device'?"

"Ah..."

Where the random teleportation would take me was unknown, the **【Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifre】** spell. With my luck stat at 999, I could transform it into an extraordinary spell that would reliably teleport me to my desired destination.

So, even if I didn't have the exact location of the "Mana Contraction Device," I could use the spell to teleport there by wishing to go, without a doubt.

“I think I probably could. Also, even if my mana value gets lowered, it doesn’t matter much for me, so I believe I can fight in optimal condition even within the underground labyrinth.”

“In that case, wouldn’t it be more certain for Sachi to destroy the magical tool first, instead of everyone attempting to destroy the ‘Mana Contraction Device’?”

“I thought the same thing, but...”

Recalling a few days before the strategy meeting, I replied.

“Actually, I’ve already proposed this idea to the national magicians through the academy head. When I was assisting in gathering the national magicians, I shared some details of the plan, and I suggested it then. However, they rejected it, stating that charging in alone would be too dangerous.”

To us, the “Mana Contraction Device” is the biggest obstacle, while to them, it serves as the most significant shield. This implies that they might have set up traps or multiple surveillance measures to prevent its destruction. If I were to charge in recklessly, I could be surrounded in an instant. If I were to be incapacitated or even taken hostage in the worst-case scenario, the situation would quickly turn unfavorable.

“Especially since there are hardly any magicians who can perform at their best under the influence of the ‘Mana Contraction Device,’ I’ve been advised to act cautiously.”

“Well, that makes sense.”

Additionally, I am still a student. The national magicians would likely not want to expose me, a student, to danger. It would be quite the image problem if a student got seriously injured due to such a situation.

“I could have charged in alone, but well... if I managed to destroy the ‘Mana Contraction Device,’ our side would gain a significant

advantage instantly.”

“However, given the possibility of heightened vigilance, it’s probably more certain if we all attack together.”

Well, I understand that perspective, so I decided to accept it. After all, our opponents are the anti-magic organization Mistral, and this situation is different from dealing with regular magicians and magical beasts. Prioritizing safety is probably the best course of action. It might not just end with “serious injuries” if things go wrong...

As I’m rekindling a sense of tension and taking a deep breath, Mil unexpectedly lets out a sigh. With an anxious expression and avoiding eye contact, I peer into her face and inquire.

“What’s the matter, Mil?”

“I didn’t expect something like this to happen so soon after the Starflower Festival.”

... Something like this, huh? Probably no one could have foreseen it.

I, too, hadn’t imagined being suddenly involved in such an extraordinary situation.

“I still can’t fully grasp the reality of it all. Having to go to war with Mistral, the rebellious faction of the magical nation.”

“I feel the same way. So many things are happening all of a sudden, and my mind hasn’t caught up to organizing everything.”

Just a few weeks ago, I was attending classes, spending regular afternoons, and being an ordinary student.

And now, suddenly, there’s talk of war.

It's not unreasonable to be unable to fully grasp the reality of it.

"I'm not fond of the uneasiness either. Even when I was at the academy, I had a hard time due to the difference in status, but compared to this commotion, I'd much prefer those days."

Mil's voice drops to a quiet murmur.

Then, while gazing at the sky, where clouds were beginning to gather, she continued as if reminiscing about a distant past.

"I want things to return to our usual days as soon as possible... to the days when I was spending time with you at the academy."

"... Yeah, I feel the same way."

I, too, want to return to the peaceful everyday life I shared with Mil.

At that moment, I noticed Mil's hand trembling ever so slightly.

Quietly, I reached out and took her hand. Surprised, she turned her gaze toward me.

Holding her cold hand tightly, I sent her a reassuring smile.

"Let's do our best to regain our 'usual' and work as hard as we can."

"Yes."

Mil returned the grip on my hand, and the tension that had been building up within me gradually eased.

The battle against Mistral was about to begin.

Chapter 88

One Who Resents Magic Power

/ Level 999 / By IX

Chapter 88: One Who Resents Magic Power

Traveling by carriage from the capital city, we arrived at the area known as the “Fruitless Forest” in just under a day.

Apparently, by employing summoning magic, they had summoned powerful horse-like magical beasts and imbued them with acceleration magic, allowing us to arrive swiftly.

Indeed, with this method, they could transport everyone to their destination at once and minimize the consumption of magical energy.

After disembarking from the carriage, we headed towards the underground labyrinth of the hideout, avoiding conflicts with the magical beasts.

Of the eight divided carriages, three had already reached the entrance of the forest, concealed behind dense undergrowth.

While hiding there, a telepathic message through magic from Verge reached us.

“Those who have arrived at the rendezvous point ahead should bestow supportive magic such as body enhancement, reconnaissance, and stealth magic in advance.”

The hideout in Mistral was filled with poisonous smoke that hindered the functioning of magical essence.

However, even if magical essence were to be contracted, the effects of spells activated beforehand would still take effect as usual.

Thus, Verge had advised us to bestow magic in advance.

I, too, had used as much supportive magic as possible.

As I waited alongside Mil for the remaining assault teams to arrive, a voice unexpectedly called out from behind.

“Sachi Malmurard-kun, isn’t it?”

“Huh?”

Turning around, there stood Verge Galan-san.

As the captain of the Northern Assault Team to which Mil and I were assigned, he was also the top-ranking magician, the commanding officer of this operation.

It seemed that the carriage carrying Verge had also arrived, and a considerable number of magicians had already gathered around.

But I hadn’t expected Verge himself to initiate a conversation with me.

“Please don’t be so nervous. I’ve just come to thank you, who helped with the gathering of state magicians, for your assistance.”

“Thank you?”

“Thanks to you, we managed to assemble the minimum required forces within the given time frame. I’m truly grateful. It was good that I managed to talk to you before the start of the assault operation.”

“Well, um, that’s something I did because I wanted to.”

I felt the same way; I wanted to stop Mistral too.

Well, being thanked by the top-ranking magician, a rank one magician, was a rare experience that didn't come often. So, I was glad I did it.

"I have high expectations for your abilities. You're a valuable asset who can engage in combat as usual even under the influence of magical essence contraction. So, if there's anything you need, don't hesitate to let me know."

"Y-you don't need to go so far..."

It seemed that he had heard about me from Headmaster Ananas, and he had placed strange expectations on me.

It was quite an honor, I thought. Just as I was thinking that, a carriage approached from a distance.

It was one of the carriages carrying the Southern Assault Team, and a familiar figure descended from it.

Rank two magician, Shan Galan.

As the captain of the Southern Assault Team and Verge's actual older brother, he was also a state magician.

"Welcome back, Shan. It looks like the Southern Assault Team has gathered as well."

"..."

Verge greeted his brother Shan in a friendly manner, but Shan only returned his gaze with a cold expression.

I wondered if he was just a taciturn person, but Verge continued in the

same tone.

“When you enter the forest, split up into teams and head for the entrances of the respective underground mazes.

Communication will be through telepathy from there. So, if anything happens with the other teams, inform me immediately...”

“Don’t get too carried away, Verge.”

Suddenly, Shan’s icy voice broke out, and the atmosphere in the area turned cold in an instant.

It wasn’t just Shan; the magicians of the Southern Assault Team, his subordinates, also seemed to be giving cold looks...

Sensing the unsettling atmosphere, I involuntarily exchanged glances with Mil. Shan directed a sharp gaze at Verge.

“This time, commanders were assigned based on magician ranks alone. However, in terms of the order of succession to the throne and actual strength, I am superior. Even Father doesn’t recognize you. Don’t get too full of yourself.”

“...I understand, Shan-nii.”

With a saddened expression, Verge responded, and Shan continued with even harsher words.

“Frankly, the fact that a magician with low magical power like you is recognized as the top-ranked magician is already a mistake. Relying solely on tricks and techniques won’t work in the long run. So, it would be wise to relinquish that position to me sooner rather than later.”

Having said this one-sidedly, Shan, accompanied by the members of the Southern Assault Team, departed towards a thicket in the distance.

(T/N: Got a feeling the southern assault team is gonna mess up badly.)
Verge, with a still sorrowful expression, only gazed at Shan's retreating back without retorting.

Soon, he regained a refreshing smile, as if nothing had happened, and turned towards us.

"I apologize for showing you an unsightly scene."

"N-no, it's..."

"The operation will commence shortly. Please finish your preparations in advance and ensure you're in perfect condition."

Saying that, Verge also left to observe the state of the Northern Assault Team.

The recent exchange lingered in my mind, and I unintentionally locked eyes with Mil.

"Are the two of them on bad terms?"

"From what I've heard through rumors, it seems that way. The relationship between the Crown Prince and the Second Prince isn't exactly amicable."

As expected, it's true. Well, anyone would figure that out after witnessing that scene.

"Furthermore, publicly suggesting that his brother is inferior in magician ranking doesn't create a favorable impression.

Also, though it happened quite a while ago, I've heard that magician rankings were considered in relation to the issue of the right of succession to the throne. There was a case where a prince who ranked lower in the hierarchy lost the throne to his younger brother. Perhaps that's also relevant..."

“He might be treating him as an enemy unilaterally because he fears that he might lose the throne himself.”

The first prince of the Magic Kingdom of Orchard, set to become the next king, and the second prince as the reserve candidate.

However, when considering magician rankings, their positions might be reversed.

Even after accounting for that, the two are still brothers.

So, if the older brother ranks lower in magician hierarchy, it wouldn't be unusual for there to be some underlying issues causing that.

It would be quite complex for the younger brother to be more skilled, both as a brother and as the first prince.

Having witnessed an unpleasant scene just before the operation was about to begin, I thought. Gradually, the magicians of the extermination squad gathered at the designated location.

With both the Northern and Southern Assault Teams now assembled, Verge's voice resonated in my mind again.

“Now that preparations are complete, the Northern and Southern Assault Teams will commence the invasion, each heading towards the entrance of their respective underground mazes.”

Renewed tension spread among the assault teams.

“If you come into contact with members of Mistral along the way, move swiftly to restrain them. Similarly, if you encounter magical beasts, deal with them swiftly and peacefully. We don't want Mistral to catch wind of our operation until the very last moment.”

As a precaution, a few magicians were positioned outside the forest.

After the assault teams entered, they would cast detection barriers to cover the forest.

Even if Mistral members managed to escape from the forest, the detection barrier would react and allow them to be captured promptly.

The operation to conquer Mistral would begin the moment we entered the forest.

“The best scenario is to reach the entrance of the underground maze without alerting them. Once both teams have arrived at their destinations, we’ll carry out the conquest by driving them from the upper levels to the lower levels, as originally planned.”

Once again, Verge declared this, and everyone’s expressions became even more resolute.

The conquest operation was now beginning.

“Without further ado, let the operation—begin!”

As the command echoed in their minds, the magicians all simultaneously entered the Fruitless Forest.

Chapter 89

The Source of All Evil

/ Level 999 / By IX

The Underground Labyrinth – 5th Layer.

Functioning as the secret hideout of the Anti-Magic Society Mistral, this underground labyrinth is structured into five layers in total.

The first layer is the magical beast layer, the second layer is the defense layer, the third layer is the residential layer, the fourth layer is the storage layer, and the fifth layer is the research layer.

In the large room covered with cave-like rock surfaces, numerous workbenches, bookshelves, and various tools for crafting magical artifacts are placed.

Although the place carries an atmosphere of a research facility, there was one thing that stood out within it.

That was a collection of various sizes of “iron cages” lined up at the edge of the room.

Inside them were imprisoned a variety of magical beasts, which were also essential materials for magical artifact research.

“Growl! Roar!!”

“Squeak! Squeak!!”

“Rumbleeeee!”

As a result, the research layer was constantly enveloped in clamor,

and amid this noise, researchers were struggling to concentrate.

Yet, even as they worked briskly, adjusting one magical artifact, there was something that caught everyone's attention.

It was a magical tool called the "Doom Flute," which could issue various commands to the magical beasts through the resonating tones it produced.

"... Looking forward to it."

Observing the researchers who were busy at their workbenches, scribbling with pens and flipping through books, was a person standing nearby.

With gray, emotionless eyes and long gray hair, she had an eerie appearance.

Her pale skin lacked vitality, and he wore a predominantly white dress.

With a ghostly appearance exuding an unsettling aura, her name was Aliment Alumette.

She was the current "leader" of the Anti-Magic Society Mistral.

Wearing a gentle smile that didn't quite match her appearance, she eagerly awaited the completion of the magical artifact.

"Aliment-sama, the adjustments to the flute will be completed shortly."

A male researcher approached Aliment with this report.

In response, she offered kind words of appreciation.

“Thank you for your hard work. With this, we can finally dismantle the structure of the magical nation. And Mistral’s ideology can prove itself right to the world.”

Then Aliment turned her attention to the researchers and continued, looking around as she spoke.

“Now, one last push. Everyone, I sincerely request your continued cooperation until the end.”

At that moment—

Suddenly, a member of the Mistral organization rushed down to the research layer, looking flustered.

“Aliment-sama!”

“...?”

The female member hurried to Aliment and, out of breath, began coughing.

“My, my, what has happened? You seem quite anxious. Take your time, there’s no rush. First, catch your breath.”

“I-I’m sorry, Aliment-sama!”

As advised, the woman took a deep breath and composed herself before speaking again.

“The National Magicians have launched an attack!”

In an instant, murmurs arose among the researchers. The National Magicians were considered their natural adversaries, causing tension to course through each one of them.

On the other hand, Aliment rested her hand against her gentle face and furrowed her brows, seemingly troubled.

“Well, this is quite problematic. The ‘Doom Flute’ isn’t even completed yet.”

Unlike the frantic researchers, Aliment appeared composed. However, the situation was indeed bothersome, and she let out a thoughtful “hmm” as she pondered.

At that moment—

“Please leave it to me, Aliment-sama.”

A “red-haired girl” who stood at a corner of the research layer knelt before Aliment and spoke.

“Well, are you coming out? That’s very reassuring, but is it alright if you don’t witness the completion of the flute together with us?”

“While your offer is enticing, the priority is your well-being, Aliment-sama, and the completion of the flute. The National Magicians who hinder us will undoubtedly be defeated by me.”

“Hehe, you’re such a good child.”

Aliment gently stroked the red-haired girl’s hair as she knelt and whispered softly in her ear.

“In that case, please go ahead. Make sure to showcase your abilities to the National Magicians.”

“Yes.”

The red-haired girl stood up and quickly headed toward the upper

level.

Watching her departing figure, Aliment quietly chuckled to herself.

“Truly, everyone is so good.”

Once again, she turned her gaze towards the researchers and continued to patiently await the completion of the flute with a smile on her face.

Chapter 89

Multiple Chants

/ Level 999 / By IX

The Mistral Subjugation Operation had commenced.

The extermination squads plunged into the Fruitless Forest, making steady progress by subduing the magical beasts along the way.

The forest was quite vast, and it seemed like it would take a considerable amount of time to reach the entrance of the underground labyrinth at the destination. However, thanks to the remarkable feats of the national magicians, we were able to reach it promptly.

Then, we divided into the Northern Assault Unit and the Southern Assault Unit, each infiltrating the labyrinth from their respective entrances.

“The national magicians are launching an attack!”

“Don’t let them proceed to the third level!”

The Northern Assault Unit, to which Mil and I were assigned, had advanced to the second level.

Guided by the lights of magical devices hanging on the walls, we made our way through the cave-like path covered with rocky formations.

In the first level, magical beasts were released as guards, but they were ineffective against the national magicians who were experts in subduing magical creatures. It was more challenging to deal with the members of Mistral.

Since rendering them powerless was a primary concern, we had to be cautious not to inflict severe injuries. Magic that could lead to death was naturally prohibited. Even I had to rely on restraint magic and body-enhancing magic instead of instant death magic for incapacitation.

In this situation where we couldn't use magic freely, they were coming at us with unfamiliar arcane tools we didn't know about. Frankly, it was quite difficult.

I faced the members of Mistral, attempting to restrain them using binding magic and body enhancement magic while maneuvering past their "Burning Longswords" and "Numbing Spears."

"So these are magical tools..."

Since "magic," powered by the energy of mana, was different in nature from magic powered by "magical essence," my

[Brief Peace Aegis□Friede] couldn't nullify them.

Even though I had used the body-enhancing magic [Fool's Strength Grand Deal] beforehand, it would be quite challenging to take these arcane tools head-on.

If the opponents were magicians, it wouldn't have been much trouble.

Additionally...

"How's your magical essence holding up? Everyone seems to have a slightly pained expression."

"I don't feel any physical discomfort, but I do sense that my magic's potency is weaker than usual. Especially as we approach the third level, it feels like the magical essence is diminishing further."

Mil looked down at her hands, her brows furrowed in concern.

This was the effect of magical essence contraction devices.

Due to the invisible toxic mist, the magical essence of the magicians was being reduced. As long as this extended throughout the entire underground labyrinth, the magicians wouldn't be able to perform at their full potential.

My probabilistic magic relied on the "brilliance" of magical essence rather than its "size," so I wasn't affected by the contraction devices. However, for the other magicians, it was undoubtedly an annoying hindrance.

It seemed that everyone was struggling to perform at their best, as they occasionally showed signs of discomfort.

Having discussed various concerns up to this point, the Northern Assault Unit was still making steady progress to the middle of the second level.

The most significant reason for this was...

"W-What's with this guy!"

"Why is he able to cast spells without incantation!"

Always at the forefront of the group, leading the squad, was a reliable individual.

Verge Galan, the top-ranking magician in the Hierarchical Order of Magicians, and the commander of the Northern Assault Unit.

Verge constantly unleashed a barrage of spells like fireballs and lightning, putting pressure on the members of Mistral.

Although the power of magic had diminished due to the contraction of magical essence, he compensated for it with an overwhelming number of spells.

“...Incredible.”

In general, magic was activated by issuing commands to the magical essence within the body using phrases called incantations. As such, it should be impossible to continuously cast spells like this, but he was able to do it.

If anyone could use non-verbal magic, it was Verge.

Normally, one needed to vocalize the incantation, but he activated magic by reciting it mentally, allowing him to cast spells at a significantly faster pace. This technique enabled him to give commands to magical essence much faster than speaking, enabling him to unleash spells rapidly.

Crossgri, a third-year scholarship student at the Academy, was a practitioner of non-verbal magic, but seeing it in action was a first for me.

And Verge Galan’s greatness as the top-ranked magician—known as the strongest magician of the current era—was not limited to this.

“If you’re going to surrender, there’s no need for rough behavior, but I suppose there’s no choice.”

What is truly astonishing is his unique “magic technique” that utilizes the non-verbal magic to its fullest potential. As the mistral members still showed a combative attitude even under the pressure of non-verbal magic, Verge finally decided to go all out.

“Roaring Thunder—Lightning from the Cloudy Sky—Annihilate the Earthly Fiends—Promised Thunderlight Promesse Eclair!”

In an instant, small waves of water surged from the ground, accompanied by lightning striking down from the ceiling of the labyrinth. The combination of these two elements transformed into an “electrified wave,” engulfing the feet of Mistral’s members.

“Ugh, aaahhhh!”

Those struck by the surge of electricity through the waves collapsed weakly to the ground, like puppets with cut strings.

Normally, it would be difficult to directly hit with a thunder spell like this, but by imbuing it onto a water-based wave spell, he annihilated the enemies.

By combining different spells, he created an entirely new magic technique, transcending the original incantations. This was the unparalleled technique known as the “Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble,” currently mastered only by Verge Galan, the top-ranked magician.

According to rumors, this technique allowed the fusion of incantation magic and non-verbal magic, resulting in a myriad of combinations. Verge is said to have developed over a thousand unique and powerful spells through this method.

Despite being considered to possess low magical power, Verge’s ability to utilize the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble enabled him to rise to his current position, showcasing his undeniable genius.

At the same time, he was a presence that challenged the current magical supremacy of the nation.

As the members of Mistral in the middle of the second level were incapacitated in an instant, I once again felt the immense power of the top-ranked magician. Sensing my gaze, Verge approached and addressed me.

“Is this your first time witnessing the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble?”

“Y-Yes... The magic becomes so much more powerful.”

“Yeah. That’s why I didn’t want to use it in interpersonal combat if I could avoid it. But these guys are pretty persistent, and our magical essence is currently contracted, so the potency is weakened to some extent.”

Right, this is due to the effects of the magical essence contraction devices. I wonder what would happen if the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble were used with the original size of magical essence?

Considering his hesitation to use it in interpersonal combat, it probably becomes quite potent.

“As of now, it seems like I’m the only magician capable of using it, so it’s natural for you to find it unusual. However, there are many talented young individuals these days, so I believe there will soon be magicians even more impressive than me.”

While Verge humbly stated this, the concept of magic had been known in the world for hundreds of years. Despite this, only Verge had been recorded as capable of using the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble.

So, it’s not easy to imagine that another genius like him would emerge so easily.

While we were having this conversation, suddenly another person’s voice chimed in from behind.

“How do you perform the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble? If there are any tips or techniques, I’d like to know.”

“Tips?”

The person who earnestly inquired with Verge was none other than Mil.

To ask a question of the top-ranked magician was a courageous act, especially for Mil. Her determination to improve and grow as a magician must be quite strong. Despite her shyness, she still trembled

a bit.

“Any tips, huh? When you put it that way, it’s a bit challenging, but do you know that the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble is an application of non-verbal magic?” Verge asked.

“Y-Yes,” Mil replied.

“There are two types of magic: ‘Incantation Magic,’ which involves giving commands to the magical essence within the body through incantations, and ‘Non-Verbal Magic,’ where you communicate with the magical essence through your mind. By simultaneously making the ‘actual voice’ and the ‘inner voice’ heard by the magical essence, it becomes possible to create a fusion of magic.”

To this point, Mil seemed to be aware of it. She nodded as Verge made this clarification.

Thinking that this was a rare opportunity, I listened closely to Verge’s continued explanation.

“Magical essence can distinguish between the ‘actual voice’ and the ‘inner voice.’ So, when you recite two separate incantations with your mouth and mind, the magical essence will activate two types of magic at the same time.

However, both incantations need to be recited accurately for the fusion of magic to be successful. That’s why, well, I hesitate to call it a ‘tip,’ but it’s an effective practice method...”

Verge carefully considered his words before explaining the practice method to both me and Mil.

“Try practicing by ‘singing a song in your head while humming a different song with your mouth.”

“Oh, so singing different songs in your head and with your mouth...?”

“In your mind, sing a ‘Happy Birthday’ song while humming the ‘National Anthem’ with your mouth. Surprisingly, not many people can do this.”

Indeed, since you’re reciting separate incantations with your mind and mouth, it’s similar to singing two different songs.

But when I tried it myself, I didn’t feel like I’d succeed. It’s incredibly difficult to hum the national anthem while mentally singing ‘Happy Birthday.’ Either one ends up neglected or the lyrics get jumbled. If I could accurately recite incantation phrases in place of songs, would I be able to use the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble like Verge does? But in the first place, successfully mastering even a single non-verbal magic is already a challenge, so this skill is not something that can be achieved overnight. It’s the result of complete effort.

Through daily magical training and confronting magical essence seriously, he managed to achieve the feat of simultaneously activating incantation magic and non-verbal magic.

Despite having lower magical power compared to other magicians, he ascended to the top through his genius-level mastery of the technique. A genius of effort who polished his skills to the limit, rising to the top despite having lower magical power than other magicians in the modern era.

“It’s not just talk. I had offered this advice to others as well. Even if you manage to master the Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble, be careful not to use it recklessly on others. The Multiple Chants Spell Ensemble is more like multiplication than simple addition. Depending on the combination of spells, it’s possible to detect values three or four times greater than your original magical power. So, handle it with caution.”

After providing such advice, Verge turned his attention back to the members of the nation’s magicians who had finished subduing Mistral’s members. Then he led the group forward again.

“All right, let’s keep moving and aim for the third level. If we manage to destroy the magical essence contraction devices there, we’ll have a significant advantage. Everyone, give it one last push.”

Motivated by his encouragement, the Northern Assault Team shook off their weariness and continued deeper into the labyrinth.

From there, we encountered no further opposition from Mistral members in the second level, and we smoothly descended into the third level.

I had a faint hope that we might actually destroy the magical essence contraction devices without any issues, but...

“Well, things probably won’t go that smoothly, huh?”

In the third level, more than twice the number of Mistral members from the second level were waiting, fully armed and prepared.

Chapter 90

Blessed Magical Power Value

/ Level 999 / By IX

In a spacious area covered with rocky walls, several wooden houses are lined up.

This is the third level of the underground labyrinth, known as the Residential Layer, where the Mistral soldiers reside.

“The dice have been cast—Guidance of the gods—If you resent, resent your own destiny—Cruel prank of fate, ForTuna!”

Currently, within the Residential Layer of the third level, the Northern Assault Team and members of Mistral are clashing.

The Mistral side, well-prepared and equipped, are using various magical tools to counter the State Magicians.

“Do not let the State Magicians proceed any further!”

“We won’t allow interference with Lord Aliment’s plans!”

Due to the effect of the magic essence contraction devices, the State Magicians are unable to use their power effectively.

Because of this, we are struggling considerably.

Even with Verge, the top-ranked magician in the hierarchy, breaking through is proving difficult.

We can only pray that the Southern Assault Team will join us soon, but they haven’t shown up yet.

Seems like they're having trouble on the upper levels, taking time to descend to the third level.

"Since coming to this layer, my magic hasn't been functioning as well...!"

"It's probably because of the magic essence contraction devices...!"

Even more reason to destroy the magic essence contraction devices as soon as possible, to allow the State Magicians to move freely.

Currently, only I, unaffected by the magic essence contraction, can do that.

Perhaps using the random teleportation spell, "Selfish Invocation – Arian Shifre," to instantly teleport to the location of the contraction devices...

"...No."

That suggestion had been rejected before.

It's dangerous to use that teleportation spell, considering we don't know what kind of traps might be set up, and the risk of ambush.

With the State Magicians launching a sudden attack, the third level is in a state of chaos, so the vigilance might be somewhat lowered.

But acting under that assumption would still be too much of a gamble.

Or perhaps...

"Lost sheep—The beckoning evangelist—Ultimately follow your own heart."

This magic is a teleportation spell where you don't know where you'll

end up.

And with my luck value of 999, I can turn it into an all-purpose magic that allows me to teleport exactly where I want.

So, I just need to think like this:

“I want to teleport to a safe place where the magic essence contraction devices are...!”

If the location of the magic essence contraction devices is safe and I can destroy them even if I go alone, then the teleportation should succeed.

Conversely, if it's considered a “dangerous place” due to surveillance or traps, the teleportation spell will fail.

This way, I can indirectly determine whether the location of the magic essence contraction devices is safe or dangerous.

“Selfish Invocation – Arian Shifre!”

As I activate the teleportation spell, my vision suddenly blurs.

And then, in an instant, my surroundings change as my body teleports.

The place I arrive at is a dimly lit room covered with rocky walls, and as the information indicated, there is a large jug-shaped magical tool set up.

“Found it...!”

The random teleportation spell was successful.

Which means there are no dangerous traps.

And the number of guards I was worried about is also quite low.

Five in total.

Perhaps it's because the State Magicians have invaded the third level that the security has been stretched thin.

“Wait, teleportation magic!?”

“How did you find this place...!?”

It seems like I've won the bet.

Indeed, my luck is exceptional.

To destroy the magic essence contraction devices, I kicked the ground with all my might.

“——Hah!”

Exhaling sharply, I sprinted forward, and in response, the armed soldiers came forward to intercept me.

They readied their magical weapons to counter our approach.

Unfortunately, I've boosted my physical abilities with “Foolish Brute Strength – Grand Deal.”

With only this level of guard, there was no way they could stop me.

“Haa!”

I slipped past the soldiers' swords and spears, darting through the gaps in an instant. I aimed for the large jug and kicked my leg out in a

flash.

The pitch-black smoky jug shattered dramatically from my kick.

As a result, the guards' faces turned pale, and the black haze that had been lingering around dispersed all at once.

“Darn it, we’ve been had!”

“This brat’s messing around with us!”

With this, the destruction of the magic essence contraction devices was complete.

The State Magicians’ magic dysfunction should be resolved now.

Having swiftly accomplished my task, I waved my hand at the armed soldiers still approaching...

“I apologize~.”

Once again, I used the teleportation spell and returned to the Northern Assault Team.

Verge was nearby as I arrived back, giving me a quizzical look and asking,

“Sachi Malmurard-kun, where on earth did you...?”

“I went and destroyed the magic essence contraction devices! Now everyone’s magic should return to normal!”

“...You’re quite the reckless one.”

While Verge seemed exasperated, he soon sent his praise along with a smile.

“But you really saved the day. Thanks to you, the State Magicians have regained their strength. From here on, it’s our time to shine.”

I nodded in response, and the State Magicians from the Northern Assault Team gained momentum, initiating their attack.

With magic back to normal, everyone was able to showcase their true abilities.

Observing this, the Mistral side realized the magic essence contraction devices had been destroyed and started to panic.

“When, when did this happen...?”

“Why is that place...?”

Moreover, this should be able to change the situation for the Southern Assault Team, who were struggling on the upper levels.

The wind shifted dramatically in our favor, and before long, we were able to disrupt the soldiers’ formation.

Verge urged them to surrender.

“This is the end, Mistral. I’ve managed to destroy the magic essence contraction devices. Surrender peacefully, and we won’t intend any further harm.”

“Surrender, you say...? Don’t make me laugh! You think we’ll give up on this!”

Even in the face of overwhelming odds, the armed Mistral soldiers

continued to show open hostility.

“We haven’t lost yet...! We’re not about to raise the white flag to those filthy State Magicians!”

However, since the State Magicians had regained their strength, the situation was clearly unfavorable.

Seemingly understanding this, they held their weapons with visible tension and sweat.

Seeing this, Verge spoke calmly, trying to discourage any further confrontation.

“We could say that our contest has reached its conclusion. Continuing to resist would only lead to more futile sacrifices.”

“Don’t just assume things! The match isn’t over yet!”

“And even if we die, we’ll never surrender to you State Magicians!”

Verge’s words fell on deaf ears as they continued to remain defiant.

Their anger towards the magicians and their hatred for the magic state overflowed.

“You guys have it easy, you know. You’ve been blessed with magical power since birth. You fit right into this magic-power-centric world.”

A man at the forefront addressed his frustrations to the top-ranking magician.

“But we’re different. Because our magical power is low, we’re scorned and rejected. From the moment we were born, we were labeled as worthless. We’re here to take away your place because you can’t understand how we feel!”

In response to his voice, other soldiers also joined in with agreeing shouts.

They were looked down upon because of their low magical power.

They were unilaterally deemed as insignificant.

That's why they despised this magic state.

I, too, have experienced similar feelings due to having low magical power, so I couldn't completely fail to understand their perspective.

But...

“Blessed with magical power, huh?”

Verge replied to the man with a gentle smile.

“For reference, can you tell me your magical power value?”

“Huh? W-Why would you...?”

“Just for reference. Come on, I won't laugh. Just go ahead and tell me.”

“...”

The soldier questioned by Verge hesitated but eventually answered the question.

“125.”



Considering the average is said to be 150, being at 125 might indeed

cause others to view him as low in magical power.

Moreover, he seemed to hold a somewhat unique position.

“I was born into a viscount’s family, a fragment of the nobility. But because my magical power didn’t match the average for State Magicians, I was disowned. They abandoned me because they believed someone with this kind of magical power could never become a State Magician. Thanks to this magic-power-centric magic state, I...”

As he continued to voice his grievances, Verge interrupted him.

“Well, well, seems like we’re in the same boat.”

“....Huh?”

“It’s a coincidence, isn’t it? My magical power is also 125.”

“W-What are you talking about? You’re Verge Gallan, the top-ranked State Magician! Just earlier, you used magic far beyond what others could! How could someone like you have the same magical power as me...”

“Although I did admit to having low magical power, I haven’t openly disclosed the exact number, so perhaps you weren’t aware. Without a doubt, my magical power is 125. Despite being born into the royal family, I had this magical power, and I was undoubtedly looked down upon for it.”

It seems they were unaware of the fact that Verge was using the Multi-Casting Spell Ensemble, as the soldiers widened their eyes in astonishment.

“The fact that magical power is important is undeniable. However, I believe it’s not everything. Even if your magical power is low, as long as you’re a person, you can be useful to someone.”

Verge continued, addressing not just the soldier in front of him but everyone.

“That’s why I want to change the current heavily skewed values. Just like all of you. So while I’m not denying your perspective, I am rejecting this ‘way’ of doing things.”

“This ‘way’...?”

“No matter how unfair the world may be, involving innocent bystanders due to anger is just plain wrong.”

As Verge spoke, the soldiers heeded his words with a clenched heart.

Yes, I don’t think their thoughts themselves are wrong.

I’ve also experienced hardships due to low magical power, and it seems Verge had similar experiences.

It’s true that there are others who’ve been eliminated, and it’s natural to have grievances about that.

But seeking revenge against the magic state to the extent of involving strangers is clearly misguided.

Seemingly realizing this anew, they couldn’t say anything in response and lowered their gazes.

“From now on, I’ll work to create a world where all of you can live comfortably. I didn’t intend to become the next king, but seeing your determination has made me reconsider. I’ll become the king of this magic state and change the values.

So I ask you to cease any further resistance and put down your weapons.”

It was a conciliatory proposal from Verge Galland, the top-ranked

State Magician and the second prince.

In response, the Mistral soldiers seemed conflicted and bewildered, their eyes wavering.

Indeed, if this person were to become king, he could address the problems that the Mistral side is facing.

Especially through the persuasion of someone with low magical power similar to their own, it seemed their hearts were being deeply moved.

The soldiers' fighting spirit gradually began to wane.

The tension that had filled the air started dissipating.

Seeing the new hope represented by Verge Gallan, the Mistral soldiers began to lower their weapons.

In an instant—

“Verge!!!”

“—Huh!?”

Suddenly, from behind, a figure attacked Verge.

A longsword made of magical flames pierced deeply into Verge's right shoulder.

“Verge-san!”

The assailant then followed up by kicking Verge and sending him flying towards the residential area.

Witnessing this scene, both the State Magicians and the Mistral

soldiers were left dumbfounded by the abruptness of it all.

All eyes turned toward the attacker, and as the figure became clear, everyone felt the same sentiment.

“Why...?”

The identity of the assailant was... the second-ranked State Magician, Verge’s actual older brother, the first prince, Shan Gallan. (T/N: What absolute trash!)

Chapter 92

Obsession for the Throne

/ Level 999 / By IX

Verge, who had been attacked by Shan, stood up next to the collapsed house.

Although his wounds seemed deep, they were already healed using recovery magic.

Therefore, it seemed that his life was not in danger, and the members of the attacking party showed a relieved expression.

However, Shan still had angry eyes fixed on Verge, and the tense situation continued.

“Verge... Die...!”

Why did Shan attack Verge?

The reason is uncertain, but it's clear that he's not in a normal state.

His eyes were bloodshot, drool dripped from the corner of his mouth, and he was sweating unnaturally.

This person in such a state, I feel like I've seen them somewhere before...

“Maron... a nuisance...! Sachi too, be killed...!”

Just like before.

When my brother Maiss went berserk during the Starlight Festival.

I remember that it was due to the side effects of forcibly amplifying magic power with amplification elixir.

Why is Shan showing similar symptoms?

And...

“We won’t let Verge-sama interfere...!”

“We’ll eradicate everyone here...!”

It’s not just Shan.

The magicians of the Southern Assault Squad he was leading were all approaching with the same bloodshot eyes.

Are all of them affected by the magic power amplification elixir? But why?

Did all the magicians of the Southern Assault Squad take it at once?

The terror of that elixir should have already been known among the National Magicians, so why would everyone in the Southern Assault Squad be so reckless?

“Ugh... Raaaagh!!!”

As the rampaging magician roared, a massive fireball suddenly shot out from his right hand without an incantation.

Everyone’s reaction was delayed by the suddenness of it.

Thinking there was no time to counter with magic, I instinctively stepped forward to shield everyone.

Thanks to the effect of my “Momentary Peace Aegis – Freid,” I could nullify magic.

Due to the optimal decision, the fireball that was about to hit the Northern Assault Squad disappeared like smoke the moment it touched my body.

Once again, I felt clear hostility from the Southern Assault Squad, and an air of suspicion spread among the Northern Assault Squad.

“Why... are the members of the Southern Assault Squad acting like that?”

Mil and the other magicians were also extremely puzzled.

The Mistral soldiers were also bewildered, unable to comprehend the situation.

No one here understood the current situation.

The only clear thing was that if nothing changed, the rampaging magicians from the Southern Assault Squad would continue to attack mercilessly.

“Shan-nii! Everyone! What in the world is going on? Get a hold of yourselves!”

Verge’s plea had no effect, and it only seemed to fuel Shan’s anger even more.

“Verge, I’ll kill you...! I’m the one who’ll become king!!”

Shan raised his flaming longsword and swung it at Verge, cutting through the Mistral soldiers.

Simultaneously, the magicians of the Southern Assault Squad also unleashed magic, targeting the Northern Assault Squad and the Mistral soldiers.

“Everyone! Stop our rampaging comrades! They’re not hearing us right now!”

With that as the start, an unwanted battle between the Northern and Southern Assault Squads began.

The targets shifted from the Mistral soldiers to the magicians of the Southern Assault Squad.

We swiftly began chanting spells to neutralize them and disable the rampaging magicians.

In the third level of the underground labyrinth – the residential area – the incantations and magic of the magicians filled the air.

Among them, the National Magicians of the Northern Assault Squad were struggling, their faces contorted as they released their spells.

“The Shan faction, are they taking advantage of this opportunity to attack us, the Verge faction?”

“No matter how much they try, they shouldn’t go that far! Besides, it’s clear that something is off!”

According to Mil’s explanation, Verge and Shan didn’t have a particularly good relationship. They held the first and second positions in the National Magicians’ ranking, and they also had a relationship as the first and second princes.

Furthermore, there was a history of the succession order for the throne being reversed based on the magician’s ranking, which seemed to be the reason why Shan had an antagonistic view of Verge.

In addition, there were significant differences in the values held by the two of them, and I heard that there were factions within the National Magicians divided between the Verge faction and the Shan faction.

The Northern Assault Squad, which was predominantly composed of the Verge faction, and the Southern Assault Squad, which was predominantly composed of the Shan faction.

Although they had been looked upon with cold eyes even before the operation and their relationship between factions wasn't that great, it was still hard to believe they would bring these issues to a mission where their lives were on the line.

Given their extreme state of excitement, something must have happened higher up.

This situation was far from the mission plan, and it was crucial to calm down the magicians of the Southern Assault Squad quickly.

“The die has been cast — Guided by the divine — If you must bear a grudge, bear it against your own destiny — Fickle play of fate, ForTuna!”

A pale yellow light emitted from my fingertips and struck one of the rampaging National Magicians.

The person's entire body tensed up as if paralyzed, and they collapsed to the ground weakly.

However, even though the restraining magic should have immobilized them, magic continued to overflow from the magician's body like a fountain.

This phenomenon was the same as what happened to Maiss when he went berserk due to the magic power amplification elixir.

Due to the effects of forcibly enlarging magic power within the body, magic power was being discharged randomly without the need for an

incantation.

Other rampaging magicians, who were also brought down by members of the Northern Assault Squad, were still causing magic to go off uncontrollably from their bodies.

“In that case...!”

I would use the same method that had calmed my brother Maiss.

While nullifying magic using the effect of my “Momentary Peace Aegis – Freid,” I rushed to the fallen magician and touched their body without hesitation.

“Hazy afternoon — Sunlight peeking through the clouds — Lull the children to a slumber — Lullaby of respite, Ulus Siesta!”

In an instant, a pale blue light surged from my right hand.

The light enveloped the target’s body gradually and brought to a halt the overflow of magic that had been occurring.

With a one-in-a-hundred-thousand chance, this magic, “Lullaby of Respite, Ulus Siesta,” could lull the magic power of the target to sleep, preventing them from using magic.

Restraining the physical movement of the target with restraining magic was pointless.

So, if I could directly lull the magic power within their body to sleep, rendering them unable to use magic, it would be effective.

I hadn’t yet perfected the level of control for this magic, particularly the timing for lulling magic power to sleep, but I couldn’t afford to be picky in this situation.

“The overflowing magic has stopped...?”

“Your magic just now...”

“I will stop their magic! Please restrain their movements in return!”

I said this without much time to explain, but the magicians of the Northern Assault Squad immediately nodded and acted.

Their quick understanding was more of their keen ability to assess situations rather than their fast comprehension.

With this, we should be able to contain the rampaging magicians to some extent for now.

However, because we had added an extra step rather than simply restraining their movements, it would take quite a bit of time.

After all, our opponents were National Magicians. Even just incapacitating them was a challenge, and now that we had added more steps, everyone was wearing strained expressions.

Among the magicians of the Northern Assault Squad, there were already those who were injured or experiencing a depletion of magic power.

“Shan-sama is truly fitting to be the next king...!”

“Your Verge faction’s ideals are fundamentally flawed to begin with...!”

“Does a person have value even without magical power? Such talk is nothing but idealism!”

As if echoing Shan’s sentiments, the magicians of the Southern Assault Squad raised their voices.

Their rampaging not only unleashed magic but also revealed their underlying frustrations.

This seemed to be the collective sentiment of the Shan faction's National Magicians.

"A person without magical power is a worthless existence! Keeping those Mistral people alive and captured? You're spewing nothing but meaningless words."

Such complaints were hurled towards us alongside their magic.

While carefully dealing with these to minimize damage to the Mistral side, I continued to neutralize the magicians.

However, Shan roared again and lunged at Verge, swinging his sword.

Verge retaliated with a sword of water, and they clashed fiercely.

"Indeed, Verge lacks the qualifications to be a king. The true king, worthy of the throne, is Shan Gallan!"

As Shan displayed his obsession for the throne, the magicians from his faction shouted in agreement. Their inner voices brought forth by their rampage.

Despite everyone likely understanding that responding to them now was futile...

"Why do you keep making assumptions like that..."

Verge, who couldn't agree with the Shan faction's beliefs, reflexively responded.

"Magical power is just a number. Even without magic, there are things

that only a person is needed for, things only they can do.”

The Shan faction believed that magical power was everything.

The Verge faction denied the current value system.

If war was about imposing one’s beliefs on the other, then perhaps the real enemies were not Mistral but rather the magicians with skewed ideologies.

Because of these magicians, there were undoubtedly those being rejected based on their low magical power.

“That’s why I, as the top-ranked magician in the hierarchy, want to change these distorted values. Even without magical power, each individual has value.”

Perhaps the words resonated with the Mistral soldiers, as they were quietly listening to Verge’s voice.

Even without magical power, each individual has value.

Hearing such words from the top-ranked magician in the hierarchy somehow made me feel a sense of relief as well.

“...As the top-ranked magician in the hierarchy, huh. Truly infuriating.”

However, Shan didn’t seem to like that perspective and retorted with a venomous tone.

Then, he pushed Verge back during their clash and swung his flaming sword while shouting again.

“Words alone won’t bring you back to sanity. I’m sorry, but from here on, things are going to get a little rough.”

Verge's eyes slightly narrowed, and his previously gentle demeanor turned as cold as ice.

“Both hands are occupied — Hidden within the heart — Carry an unbearable burden on your back — Secret container, Espa's Pouch!”

As he chanted, a faint blue-white light appeared on Verge's right hand.

In an instant, he sharply kicked the ground and slipped into Shan's guard, who was swinging his flaming sword.

Enhanced physical abilities brought to the utmost limits by body strengthening magic.

Using these, Verge closed in on Shan and pressed his right hand, which was radiating a blue-white light, against Shan's abdomen.

In a flash, Shan's figure vanished from sight.

“Huh...?”

In that fleeting moment, I inadvertently halted my combat actions and stood frozen.

Likewise, the magicians around me who were engaged in battle were wide-eyed, witnessing a shocking spectacle.

A person disappeared. In itself, that wasn't so astonishing.

There were teleportation spells that could be used on others, which meant Shan could have been teleported somewhere else.

However, the spell Verge had just used was supposed to be familiar to everyone: “Storage Magic.”

It was a life magic that generated a separate space with magic, into which one could store items — “Espa’s Pouch.”

In magic, it was as basic as it could get, a spell that everyone should know, but...

“Sh-Shan-sama vanished...?”

“Why use Storage Magic on a person...?”

Yes, Storage Magic was meant to store objects.

It was a magic to store small, inanimate objects, not something that could encompass living beings.

So why did Shan disappear using that magic...?

“Ah, Multi-Casting Spell Ensemble...”

By simultaneously activating chant magic and non-chant magic, it allowed for the fusion of spells.

Verge, who lacked magical power but still rose to become the top-ranked magician in the hierarchy, was the embodiment of this technique.

Although it seemed like he just used Storage Magic normally, did he actually merge it with another spell to create a special effect?

If, for instance, he combined it with teleportation magic, he might be able to teleport others into the separate space generated by Storage Magic.

Originally, the only practical use of Storage Magic was to store overflowing baggage, but by combining it with teleportation magic, it could be elevated into a “Prison Magic” that could confine people.

This way, even the rampaging magicians who were hard to deal with could be rendered powerless with just one move.

Even if they went wild in the created space, there would be no real damage.

“We haven’t yet verified the effects of storing a human body using this magic. Plus, it consumes a considerable amount of magical energy, so I didn’t want to use it too much...”

Muttering so, Verge lightly touched a rampaging magician nearby with his right hand.

In an instant, just like Shan moments ago, the magician’s form disappeared.

Once again, a rampaging magician was sent to another space, a prison created by Storage Magic.

After that, Verge efficiently sent one rampaging magician after another into the separate space, and soon, all the rampaging figures from the third layer’s residential area vanished without a trace.

Thanks to Verge’s efforts, the previous chaos was replaced by a peaceful silence on the scene.

“...Amazing.”

Verge had prepared separate spaces for each rampaging magician and executed forceful teleportation.

Although it seemed to have left him quite exhausted, with sweat forming on his forehead, Verge’s efforts managed to prevent casualties.

There were many injuries, but fortunately, there were no fatalities.

This was the power of the top-ranked magician. With just one person, he had neutralized a group of rampaging National Magicians.

Perhaps Verge's words had touched the hearts of the Mistral soldiers as well, as they unknowingly lowered their weapons.

As everyone stood stunned, Verge turned his gaze towards us, showing a relieved expression.

“Everyone, it's finally over...”

In an instant —

A red figure swept across our field of vision.

“——What!?”

This figure swiftly closed in on Verge.

In the next moment, an enormous roar accompanied a powerful blow that struck him.

The force was so immense that the shockwave turned into a gust of wind, sweeping towards us, simultaneously sending Verge's body flying towards the direction of the rocky wall.

“Verge-san!”

The top-ranked magician had lost consciousness due to the single blow from the red figure.

Witnessing the shocking scene, everyone was rendered speechless and dumbfounded.

It was true that the consecutive use of high-level magic had taken a toll on his stamina.

Perhaps his reactions had dulled due to that fatigue, but that didn't make the top-ranked magician any less formidable when caught off guard.

Yet, with just one strike, the de facto strongest magician had been completely subdued.

"Thanks to your internal strife, I was saved the trouble. Truly, magicians are foolish beings."

The formidable red figure that had brought shock to the scene slowly turned our way.

The identity of that figure was a red-haired girl with a youthful face, not much older than me or Mill.

Wearing a modest black top and cloak, a short black skirt, and knee-high stockings, her attire bore a slight resemblance to the uniforms of a magic academy, mainly black and exuding an agile appearance.

Her slender body was shrouded in that attire, and she looked delicate, leaving us wondering from where on that body the tremendous force of that earlier strike had been generated.

"W-Who is that girl...?"

"She incapacitated Lord Verge in one blow..."

None of us could move an inch from where we stood.

The threat that rendered that supernatural being known as Verge Gallan powerless with a single blow.

The immense strength and speed she had displayed before our eyes could only be described as “abnormal.”

Who in the world is she...

“Why...?”

...At that moment.

Amidst the state of turmoil and everyone’s inability to move, there was a single person slowly approaching the red-haired girl.

With an expression filled with sorrow and her round aqua eyes glistening, the “blue-haired girl” gazed upon the red-haired girl.

“Mil...?”

The girl was none other than Miltiyu Grasse, my partner.

Amidst the disarray and paralysis that had befallen everyone, Mill was the only one calmly walking toward the front.

“Why...?”

And then, Mil...

In a voice that seemed as though she might break into tears any moment, she addressed the red-haired girl.

“Why are you here, Plum-chan!”

Plum-chan...?

In response to Mil’s cry, the girl addressed as such let out a sigh and spat out her words with a mix of annoyance.

“Whose fault do you think it is, you jinx?”

Chapter 93

Precious Childhood Friend

/ Level 999 / By IX

“You’re such a klutz as always. You’re an incurable case, Mil,” Plum said.

Memories of their childhood days resurfaced in Mil’s mind – memories of the time spent with a girl of the same age in their hometown, the village of Olivier. Unlike her timid self, the girl was strong-willed and lively, always holding her hand like an older sister.

Despite the falling out caused by involving her in her misfortune, Mil still considered her a precious childhood friend. The girl’s name was Plum Cuillère.

(If it’s a lie, that would be fine. If it’s just my misunderstanding...)
With information obtained from the mole within the magical academy, Heimbeere, the identities of Mistral’s members had already been revealed. Mil had found a familiar name among them and joined the mission to confirm its truth.

When she told Sachi about having a bit of “business” with Mistral, that was the reason.

She had hoped that it would turn out to be a different person with the same name, but...

That hope had just been shattered.

“I wish I’d never been with someone like you! This jinx won’t appear before me ever again!” Plum’s angry words resounded.

No doubt about it. The red-haired girl standing before her gaze was indeed her childhood friend, Plum.

Somewhere unknown to her, Plum had become a member of Mistral.

Seeing Plum mercilessly blast away Verge, her certainty grew. Countless question marks filled her mind naturally.

“You seem to be wondering why I’m here, but you understand it better than anyone else, Mil.”

“Huh...?”

“Well, never mind. For now, let’s put you aside. First...”

At that moment, the National Alchemists standing beside them suddenly lunged forward.

“How dare you lay a hand on Lord Verge!”

“Capture that person immediately!”

The fall of their revered Lord Verge had stirred up the anger of many alchemists. Mil used body-enhancing magic to dash towards Plum, the perpetrator.

However...

“——!?”

In the blink of an eye, Plum vanished from their sight.

Right after, a National Alchemist who had charged forward was blown away by a powerful impact, hurtling backward. As we looked in that direction, another National Alchemist was sent flying, followed by their comrades, one after another.

Eventually, as the consciousness of the dozens of alchemists who had charged forward was stolen, the girl responsible for it returned to her original position without a sound.

(...Fast. And unusually so.)

Her swiftness exceeded that of National Alchemists who used body-enhancing magic. Furthermore, her strength was enough to incapacitate them in a single blow, despite their magical enhancements. They had been overwhelmed to the point that the alchemists' exhaustion from the previous battle no longer mattered.

"You thought you could defeat me with a battered body like that? Such foolishness," Plum mocked.

The National Alchemists felt a surge of despair as they witnessed her formidable strength. They realized that any hasty movement would result in their swift defeat, leaving them with no choice but to stand still.

One couldn't help but wonder what it would have been like if Verge Gallan had been present in perfect condition.

"Verge Gallan. Facing you head-on would have been troublesome, so I utilized the twisted relationship between you and your brother. Thanks to that, I managed to exhaust the faction members, which turned out to be the right decision."

Upon Plum's muttering, the magicians of the Northern attack Squad were taken aback.

"Could it be that you were the one who incited the Southern attack Squad against us?"

"Was it all your doing...?"

"What else could be imagined in this situation? You've seen how abnormal they've become."

Plum smirked, shrugging her shoulders.

“Knowing that Prince Shan Gallan’s position as the first in line for the throne was threatened due to the magician rankings, I forcefully made him ingest a mana-amplifying elixir to induce a rampage. As expected, he attacked the faction supporting the second prince, the ones he despise, and it turned out to be a masterpiece.”

“...!”

The National Magicians clenched their fists in anger upon learning the truth.

Indeed, that abnormal state they witnessed was a result of the mana-amplifying elixir-induced rampage. Moreover, it was Plum standing before us who had incited it.

She had forcibly made the Southern attack Squad magicians ingest the elixir and manipulated them into a reckless rampage.

According to the information already available, those who consumed the elixir were accelerated into a berserk state influenced by their emotions. It seemed that Maron, who was attacked by Maiss Glacier, considered her presence a hindrance and became the spark of his rampage.

Plum had skillfully exploited the excessive enmity between the first and second prince factions, effectively forcing them into fratricidal combat.

“This is preposterous...!”

Being unwillingly dragged into conflict, they displayed their frustration.

While it was true that they had been in conflict with the Shan faction’s

magicians, being instigated into a fight by a third party was unacceptable.

Just like the magicians earlier, they were tempted to attack out of anger, but when Plum glanced at them, they tensed up.

They couldn't move from here. They had no idea where to strike. They were in a situation where making a reckless move could result in their heads being severed in an instant.

(Plum's strength... what exactly is it?)

Plum came from a noble lineage and dreamed of becoming a National Magician in the future. Despite studying magic from a young age, she had fallen into mana deficiency due to the venom of a magical beast inadvertently brought about by Mil.

Her mana had been paralyzed, rendering her unable to use magic. However, she exhibited physical abilities that surpassed even National Magicians.

To achieve such movements, there should have been no other way but to apply body-enhancing magic.

But how could Plum, unable to use magic, possess such incredible strength? Could it be that she achieved that level of power with her natural physical abilities alone?

“That trivial chatter is enough. Come on, all of you, hurry up and kill the one who ranks first in the magician hierarchy.”

“...”

Plum gave orders to the Mistral soldiers standing near Verge. In response, they exchanged puzzled glances.

Shortly afterward, a surprised response came from them.

“W-We can’t do that.”

“Huh?”

“We can’t kill this person.”

“What on earth do you mean?”

Intense tension flowed between Plum and the Mistral members.

“This person said that even those without magical power have value. Besides, these people have fought alongside us while protecting us!”

“I despise magicians, and I hate magic-using nations. But I can’t turn my blade against these people anymore.”

Unexpectedly, both Plum and the National Magicians were rendered speechless by this change of heart.

The battle they had just engaged in had not been in vain.

Verge’s words had indeed reached their hearts.

The current nation held a skewed perspective, but there were many magicians who refused to accept it. They believed that Verge Gallan’s presence could bring change to the current state of the magical nation.

“If Verge Gallan becomes king, he’ll correct these misguided values...!”

“We no longer need to fight! Verge Gallan has declared his intention to aim for the throne in our presence...”

—In an instant.

Thud!

A fist-sized rock was hurled at one of the Mistral soldiers.

It struck his forehead, producing a dull sound as it shattered in mid-air.

“Ah... guh...!”

“Since you seem half-asleep, it was just the right wake-up call, wasn’t it?”

Plum seemed to have thrown the rock unnoticed, and the soldier’s forehead began to bleed.

Infuriated, the soldiers glared at Plum, only to be met with an even sharper gaze.

“Don’t listen to what those magician folks are saying. In this world, Aliment-sama’s words are everything. We’ll eradicate every magician who clings to magic to survive.”

Plum narrowed her eyes further, releasing both her gaze and an aura of killing intent.

“I won’t let you forget Mistral’s will. Or perhaps, if you’ve forgotten, would you prefer me to keep hitting you until you remember?”

Upon hearing these threatening words, the soldiers tensed up even more.

They seemed to be well aware of Plum’s strength, and they found themselves unable to respond strongly.

While they had heard that there were no clear ranks within Mistral,

judging from the situation, Plum seemed to be effectively the top fighting force.

Nevertheless, the Mistral soldiers...

In an effort to protect the beacon of hope, Verge Gallan, they stood in Plum's path.

"...Yes, that's our answer."

An uprising that was totally unexpected occurred, leaving Plum and the others taken aback.

In an instant, an immense killing intent emanated from her entire body, and a tension akin to coldness filled the area.

"In that case, all of you shall die here...!"

As Plum began to take a step forward with those words—

“【Whims of Fate, ForTuna】!”

“—!?”

Unbeknownst to them, Sachi had finished chanting and suddenly approached Plum.

In order to ensure a direct hit with her magic, Sachi moved towards Plum and extended her glowing right hand to its limit.

Her intention was likely to cast a restraining spell before Plum could react, but...

Plum's superhuman reflexes barely surpassed Sachi's movement.

The luminous sphere released from Sachi's right hand narrowly missed Plum.

Plum's lips curved into a slight smile due to that narrow miss. However, Sachi didn't stop there.

While maintaining her momentum, she delivered a kick toward Plum.

Her second strike followed closely behind, and this time, it firmly captured Plum.

“Ugh...!”

Sachi's lightning-fast kick sent Plum flying a considerable distance.

Taking advantage of that momentary opening, Sachi shouted:

“Everyone, retreat to higher ground!”

“...Sachi-san.”

“While I'm holding her back, hurry!”

Sachi's decision was undoubtedly correct.

In the current circumstances, they likely had no means to defeat Plum. Sachi might have been their only hope, but her unexpected attack had already been dodged.

Even Sachi couldn't fully capture the formidable opponent.

Furthermore, the National Magicians were also severely exhausted.

Remaining here would only result in their deaths, leaving them with

no choice but to flee.

It could be said that Sachi taking on the role of restraining Plum was the best course of action.

Unlike the other magicians, she could use magic with the probability-based spell, 【Stellar Encounter Solstice Etoile】 , without consuming magical essence.

As a result, she had the most remaining magical energy among the assault team, and due to the effects of 【Momentary Peace Aegis Frei】 , she was left unscathed.

Apart from her, no one else present could effectively restrain Plum.

Sachi understood this and had chosen to take on this responsibility herself.

“—!”

For a brief moment, the National Magicians bit their lips but immediately turned to look behind them, heading towards the exit.

They likely judged that there was no other option but to leave this task to Sachi.

Just like Verge, many of their comrades were wounded and collapsed. Engaging in combat here would undoubtedly drag them all into the fight.

To prevent multiple casualties, the National Magicians carried their fallen comrades on their backs and hurried towards the rear.

Similarly, the Mistral soldiers who had also been marked for elimination by Plum hurriedly followed the National Magicians.

“Thinking you can escape so easily...!”

Plum attempted to chase after the fleeing targets, but Sachi stood in her way.

With a movement as if implying it was bothersome, Plum swung her fist. However, Sachi intercepted the blow with a single hand.

Her physical capabilities had been greatly enhanced by the probability-based spell, 【Foolish Strength of a Fire Scene Grand Deal】.

Yet, Plum’s strength was also incredible, and the substantial difference in combat skills caused Sachi to gradually be pushed back in close combat.

Even if she wanted to activate a probability-based spell, Plum relentlessly pressed on, denying her the opportunity.

The way of dismantling magicians, mastered perfectly by someone who understood how to do it.

(Then, I’ll...)

As the magicians raced past her, Mil ran towards Sachi and Plum.

“【Snowfalling — Pure White Flowerbed — Bloom from the Depths of Ice and Snow】 — 【Frost Rose of Icy Flowers Noel】!”

A light blue magic circle expanded at the tip of Mill’s staff-like wand.

From there, icy tendrils extended like serpents, assaulting Plum as they passed by Sachi’s side.

Plum, aware of Mill’s approach, swiftly retreated to dodge the attack.

Meanwhile, Sachi seemed surprised by Mill's arrival and turned around with an unexpected expression.

“Mil!? Mill, get out of here quickly—!”

“I still have something I need to do...!”

She thought it was crucial for everyone to escape from here and regroup before anything else.

But standing before her, she couldn't just leave in silence.

Not when she was facing her precious childhood friend...

“You've got guts. I wanted to deal with you last, but if you're so eager to die, I'll make it easy for you right now.”

And thus, a poignant battle began.

Chapter 94

The Magician's Murderer

/ Level 999 / By IX

“The die has been cast...”

As Sachi began her incantation, Plum vanished from her field of view.

In an instant, Plum closed the distance to Sachi and launched an attack on her mid-incantation.

Sachi managed to avoid the unexpected strike by hastily retreating, but her magic incantation was interrupted.

“The accumulating white snow...”

Following suit, Mil began her incantation.

However, once again, Plum reacted to the voice and swiftly moved to interrupt the incantation.

“Ugh...!”

Plum's lightning-fast kick accurately struck Mil's side.

Empowered by the formidable body enhancement magic with a magical power value of 350, Mil's physique surpassed its limits.

Yet, even with the effects of that magic, she couldn't withstand Plum's destructive blow.

“Mil!”

“I’m... alright!”

Observing Mil, who managed to stand again, Plum displayed a mocking smile.

“As expected, you’re tough. Even a concealed blade in a shoe can’t scratch you. In that case, I’ll just slowly torture you.”

Saying so, Plum clenched her fist and approached.

There was no time to catch their breath amidst the relentless onslaught. Sachi and Mil grimaced in pain.

They were given no opportunity to perform their incantations.

It seemed that Plum intended to prevent them from using magic.

The moment they attempted to start their incantations, she closed the distance swiftly and launched an attack.

No matter how softly they whispered the incantations, her exceptional hearing detected and anticipated it.

Being interrupted during incantations was incredibly troublesome, and it was one of the weaknesses of magicians.

However, by alternating their incantations, Plum’s attacks seemed to be dispersed.

Thanks to that, they managed to avoid receiving a decisive blow and found themselves unintentionally in a balanced standoff.

A fragile equilibrium where if either side’s focus wavered, it could lead to their defeat.

Sachi and Mil risked the possibility of one of them being incapacitated due to a delayed incantation.

Plum faced the threat of being hit by magic if her responses were sluggish.

Sachi was the one to put an end to this tense situation.

“The die has been cast...”

“Idiot, no matter how many times you try the same thi—!”

As the incantation reached her ears, Plum immediately rushed towards Sachi, but...

At the same time, Sachi darted toward Plum as well.

“What!?”

Caught off guard by Sachi’s unexpected move, Plum was too slow to react and received a powerful body blow to her abdomen.

A surprise attack masked as starting an incantation.

A spellcaster in the midst of incantation was utterly defenseless.

Hence, rapidly closing the distance and striking was the standard approach.

Sachi cleverly turned this tactic against Plum, baiting her attack with the first phrase of the incantation.

“Tch...!”

Plum, struck by Sachi, was sent flying backward by the impact.

This created enough distance for Sachi to begin her incantation freely.

Recognizing this, Sachi wasted no time and attempted to start her incantation, but...

“What...!?”

In midair during her flight, Plum somehow managed to adjust her posture—a remarkable feat of extraordinary strength and core control.

With both her legs stabbing into the ground upon landing and pushing off the ground to nullify her momentum.

Consequently, in just three seconds since being sent flying, Plum returned right in front of Sachi.

“Ugh...!”

Once again struck by Plum’s attack, Sachi was forced to interrupt her incantation and step back.

During this interval, Mil attempted to distance herself from Plum and start her incantation, but she couldn’t make a sound due to Plum’s piercing gaze.

With the first phrase of the incantation, her efforts to create distance were thwarted once again.

(...So strong...)

The true nature of this overwhelming strength was a mystery.

An opponent so formidable that not even Sachi and Mil together could neutralize her.

Plum's distinctiveness was evident in this regard.

Sachi excelled in combat against magical beasts and magicians, displaying an “invincible” strength.

A probability magic that could instantly kill magical beasts in a single blow—[Death Notice of the Devil].

A probability magic that nullified harmful magic—[Aegis Fried].

These powers ensured that neither magical beasts nor magicians could approach her. However, they had no effect against non-magicians.

Since she couldn't resort to lethal magic, she engaged in close combat without relying on spells.

Additionally, Sachi's use of [Grand Deal, Foolish Strength] to enhance her body proved ineffective. Plum constantly moved around, exploiting magicians' vulnerabilities with precision.

Her tactics were so refined that she consistently made them feel suffocated.

It was as if she had been trained specifically to kill magicians, evident from her exceptional skills.

“Why...?”

Unintentionally, a question spilled from Mil's lips.

Developing such skills to this extent required more than ordinary determination.

However, possessing techniques to kill magicians to this degree indicated a significant hatred towards them.

It was clear from her affiliation with the anti-magic organization Mistral that the resentment she held was far from ordinary.

“Why... like this?”

In response, Plum shrugged her shoulders in exasperation.

“Do you seriously mean what you just said?”

“Huh...?”

“I’m not gonna explain why I turned out like this. It’s not something you’d understand.”

Veins throbbed on Plum’s forehead, and her furious shout reverberated through the living area.

“None other than you is to blame! It’s because of you that I ended up like this!”

“...”

Mil widened her eyes in surprise.

In response, Plum continued, venting her anger as if she was confronting it head-on.

“I won’t let you forget. Because of you, I was cursed to a body that can’t use magic. I lost my dream of becoming a National Magician, and I became a laughingstock. I had my future ripped away, and I was ridiculed by those around me.”

During her childhood, while playing together in the woods, she had been unfortunate enough to be attacked by a magical beast.

The venom of that magical beast paralyzed magical energy, and Plum, who had been subjected to a large dose, was rendered unable to use magic. (T/N: I have a feeling it was Mistral's leader who led this beast to her!) Born as a lord's daughter, she possessed the magical talent expected of her noble lineage. She used to talk about her aspiration to become a National Magician.

After losing the ability to use magic, Plum had no choice but to give up her dream of becoming a National Magician.

Considering the resentment she bore, it wasn't strange that she harbored hatred.

Furthermore, there was another negative outcome that had further warped Plum's psyche.

"Nobody cared about me when I couldn't use magic. At social gatherings, I was ridiculed for not being able to use magic, and my supposed friends treated me with contempt. My family stopped expecting anything from me, and I cursed this magic-centric world from the bottom of my heart."

For a girl of about ten years old, these were reasons enough to develop a distorted mind.

"That's why I was lured by Lord Aliment and joined Mistral. Since then, I've focused solely on eradicating magicians and honed physical techniques to kill them. Eventually, I even resorted to body modifications with magical tools..."

Everything, absolutely everything, is because of being with you!"

And that is the secret of Plum's strength.

The unrelenting resentment she harbors towards magicians serves as her driving force, making her strong to this extent.

Realizing that she herself was the cause of this resentment, Mil felt a

twinge of guilt.

At that moment...

“Mil is not at fault.”

“...Sachi-san?”

Her partner, who had been listening nearby, offered words of comfort.

“What’s with you? And who are you anyway?”

“I’m a classmate from the same magical academy, and Mil’s ‘partner’.”

“...Magical academy?”

Plum’s glare intensified, and her anger became palpable.

“Come to think of it, you’ve also enrolled in the magical academy. You robbed me of my dream to become a National Magician, and yet you’re happily studying at the magical academy. Quite the audacity, trying to harass me?”

“N-No, it’s not like that! I didn’t mean to...”

Sachi interjected with protective words.

“Mil is aiming to become a National Magician to find a way to help her mother, who is ill. She’s not the kind of person who would intentionally harass someone.”

“...I’m not talking to you.”

“And also, Mil told me something. She has another reason for

enrolling in the magical academy.”

“What?”

Frowning unhappily, Plum was told what Mil had shared.

“In the past, she wanted to become a National Magician to find a way to heal a childhood friend who got involved in unfortunate circumstances. I believe that friend is you.”

“...”

Plum’s expression shifted to one of shock.

Then she turned her gaze slowly towards Sachi, who spoke again.

“By becoming a National Magician, Mil would have access to substantial research funding, as well as facilities and information. This would enable various kinds of research, and she hoped to find a way to heal your abnormal magical essence...”

“...You can’t seriously expect me to believe that. And even if you did say that now, did you think I’d forgive you? In the first place, your National Magician-level research wouldn’t find a solution for this. In fact, you and Sachi weren’t able to do anything about the ‘Magical Essence Contraction Device.’”

“Magical essence... contraction device?”

Mil wondered why the topic of magical essence contraction devices had come up now.

“The magical essence contraction device was developed based on the venom of that magical beast from back then.”

“Huh...?”

“The fact that you couldn’t deal with that shows that National Magician-level research was useless. There’s no way to heal my condition! Your research can’t find a way to cure me!”

Currently, there was no medical solution to treat abnormalities in magical essence.

Healing magic had also been proven ineffective.

Even Sachi’s perfect healing magic couldn’t fix the abnormality that had occurred in her magical essence.

During the final exams, Mil, affected by the magical essence contraction device, had received Sachi’s perfect healing magic. While it healed her physical injuries, it couldn’t address the abnormality in her magical essence.

The presence of magical essence in the body was something that couldn’t be interfered with by human means.

“That’s why I’m determined to destroy the magic-centered nation itself. With Lord Aliment, I’ll retaliate against those detestable magicians, proving my own worth!”

Plum’s resolute determination remained unshaken.

Seeing this, Mil’s determination grew stronger once again.

If she didn’t stop Plum now, she would undoubtedly go on to kill many more magicians in the future.

Plum, who was still a cherished childhood friend and someone Mil admired like an elder sister, couldn’t be allowed to do such a thing.

(Here and now, I will definitely stop Plum-chan...!)

As if rejecting that sentiment, Plum began to move again.

“——!”

In an instant, Sachi and Mil were startled and tensed up as Plum closed in swiftly.

They hadn't been careless.

In fact, they had been vigilant about every move Plum made.

However, Plum's actions were efficient and precise, and they couldn't sense her initial movement.

Perhaps because her anger had swelled due to their earlier conversation, Plum's palm was now poised near Mil's throat.

“Mil!”

Sachi, reacting just in time, lunged forward and managed to intervene between Mil and Plum.

Her delayed reaction resulted in a rather awkward posture as she shielded Mil.

Plum didn't miss this opening.

“Heheh.”

For a moment, an eerie smile appeared on Plum's face.

From within her pocket, she produced a single “card.”

And she forcefully pressed that card against the opening in Sachi's chest.

“——!?”

In an instant...

Sachi, who had stood before Mil, vanished abruptly...

“Sachi-san...?”

In her place, Plum's figure appeared with a more insolent smile...

“With this, there's no more interference.”

Chapter 95

An Admirable Presence

/ Level 999 / By IX

The sudden disappearance of her partner.

Mil couldn't hide her confusion at that fact.

Amidst intense feelings of loss and anxiety, Plum muttered in front of her.

"If possible, I would have liked to have her killed by my own hands, but there's no time left."

"W-Where did you take Sachi-san!?"

A strange card taken out from her pocket.

Sachi disappeared after being affixed with it.

It was likely some sort of magical tool, one that had the effect of forcibly teleporting the target. Even Sachi, who could nullify magic, couldn't nullify the effects of magical tools.

Mil's expectations were correct to that extent, and Plum deliberately revealed this to give her an excessive sense of despair.

"If your precious friend were to drown soon, wouldn't that be a tragedy?"

"Drown... die...?"

“I directly teleported her to the water storage room in the corner of the fourth layer’s storage section.”

The water storage room.

That alarmed Mil even more.

The greatest weakness of magicians, one could say.

That was “underwater.”

What supported the foundation of magicians was, needless to say, magic.

And the activation of that magic required the “chanting” of spells.

By commanding the magical essence within their bodies through the form of chanting, they could induce supernatural phenomena—a technique known as magic.

Therefore, for magicians, chanting was like a lifeline, and Plum had been attacking here to prevent that chanting from occurring.

Such an important chant couldn’t be performed underwater, no matter what.

(At this rate, Sachi-san will...!)

Remaining trapped in the water prison, Sachi was fated to die by drowning, just as Plum had said.

“While it annoyed me to give up a one-time-use card, with this, I can thoroughly torment and kill you. I’ll make you understand the depth of my grudge...!”

Plum clenched her fist and approached the still-confused Mil.

Mil quickly stepped back, but Plum immediately closed the distance between them.

“Ugh...!”

Plum’s merciless blow struck Mil’s cheek.

Thrown back by the impact, Mil immediately tried to start chanting, despite the pain.

However, Plum wouldn’t allow it; she persistently closed in and delivered punches.

(There’s no time to chant or create distance...!)

Earlier, she had been engaging with Sachi, so Plum’s attention was divided.

But now, facing Plum alone, all of her attacks were directed at Mil.

There was no chance to chant, let alone take a breath.

(How can I win against this...?)

Continuously being pushed around by Plum, Mil was in a sorry state.

Her legs, supporting her body, trembled, and she couldn’t even stand properly.

“Haa... haa...!”

“...Pathetic. Have you finally realized the extent of your guilt?”

With tears welling up due to the pain, Mil quietly clenched her lips.

(I don't stand a chance against Plum-chan...)

She felt that once again.

The person standing before her right now was the high-standing individual she had admired in the past.

No matter what she did, that person was always superior to her.

Like an older sister, she had always guided her.

Comforted her when she cried, encouraged her when she was down; she had been a great presence supporting her.

(I can't win against someone like her. I'll always be the cowardly Mil, only cowering behind someone...) Ultimately, the sense of powerlessness when alone.

Overwhelmed by Plum, who was like an older sister, Mil was painfully reminded that she was an incompetent younger sister.

A single tear silently fell from her teary eyes.

"Hmm... well, things will probably work out somehow. Maybe."

At that moment...

In her mind, she saw her partner's smiling face.

"I'll definitely make him bow down. I'll convey Mil's frustrated feelings for her, so rest assured and watch from here."

During her initial enrollment at the Magic Academy, there was a dispute with a nobleman of the same year.

Mil's cherished pendant was broken, and Sachi, angry on her behalf, ended up challenging the nobleman to a mock battle in her place.

Her opponent hailed from a prestigious family of magicians. There was little hope of winning.

Everyone thought so, but even so, Sachi chose to fight for her friend Mil.

In the end, she demonstrated an overwhelming difference in strength and emerged victorious.

It was at that moment that Mil first felt a strong admiration for Sachi.

(If it's Sachi-san, she won't give up here...!)

No matter how dire the situation, that person never gave up.

Always smiling, she spread her energy to others as well.

She taught the importance of continuing to fight.

Mil wanted to become strong like her.

She had thought this countless times before.

So, she couldn't give up here.

(My "current admiration" is for that person!)

She would let go of the past admiration that had held her back.

She wasn't an incompetent younger sister.

She was "Magician Mil," a one-year special scholarship student at the Royal Harvest Magic Academy.

Mil rekindled the flames of determination in her eyes and held her wand aloft.

"The commotion is filling the air...!"

"That's why...!"

As she began to chant, Plum once again rapidly closed in.

A sharp kick came flying at her, and Mil was struck in the abdomen and sent flying.

"I've been telling you I won't give you the chance to chant, haven't I?"

"Ugh... Ku...!"

Still, Mil stood up and moved her lips.

"The commotion is filling the air...!"

"That's why I'm saying it's futile!"

Naturally, Plum wouldn't let her chant freely either; she always closed the distance and launched attacks.

Despite being hit, kicked, and knocked down, Mil continued to get back up.

(I can't give up...! I can't stop thinking...!)

There must be a way to defeat Plum.

The answers were in what she had learned, cultivated, and seen up until now.

Mil's thoughts raced.

Plum was closing in at an incredible speed, leaving her no time to chant.

She clearly knew how to shut down magicians completely.

In that case...

"What she learned was a way to defeat 'ordinary magicians.' But I'm not an 'ordinary magician.'"

She just had to break free from being an ordinary magician.

Just like that admired person, who was an exceptional magician.

Reach for new strength, beyond the limits...!

"However much you struggle, you can't defeat me! Just die already, Mil!"

Seeing Mil about to give in, Plum swung her fist with all her might.

In the face of the final blow, Mil, battered and bruised, readied her wand.

(I was watching closely...)

Her unwavering determination lit a spark at the tip of her wand.

“Ice-covered land of Niflheim!”

“——Huh!?”

A water-blue magic circle spread out at the tip of the wand, emitting intense cold.

It froze the ground as if crawling along it.

The rapid spread of cold air left no room for even Plum to react.

“Ugh——!”

Plum, who had been right in front of her, had her footing frozen unexpectedly.

The ice climbed all over her body, completely covering her from the neck down in thick ice.

Plum couldn’t move her hands or feet.

“W-Why can you use... ‘no-chant magic’...!? Could it be...!?”

Plum’s eyes widened in shock.

Without verbal incantations, Mil had launched magic at high speed.

She was aware of that technique that transcended human intelligence.

“It’s worth a try... ‘No-Chant Magic’...”

Plum closed the distance and disrupted magic chants.

So, the simple solution was to cast magic without the chant.

Instead of using verbal incantations, transmit commands directly to the magical essence from the mind to activate magic.

By doing so, one could cast magic at a speed that far exceeded the norm.

This was what was known as “No-Chant Magic.”

During the Starlight Festival, Mil had seen third-year special scholarship student Crossgri Travaire use it.

During the extermination operation, she had seen top-ranked magician Verge Galarn use it.

Mil had learned from watching them and now, in this critical moment, she perfectly imitated it.

With a magic power value of 350, she cast a super-powered ice magic without chants at an extraordinary speed.

In this moment, Mil, too, was elevated to an undeniable extraordinary magician.

“I win, Plum-chan.”

“...”

The once timid, crying, always-hiding-behind-someone girl... was surpassing her former admiration.

Chapter 96

I'm Sorry

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Mil!”

Immediately after restraining Plum,

Sachi, who should have been transported to the fourth-floor water storage room, suddenly appeared from an empty space.

Mil had been about to go help Sachi, so her appearance took her by surprise.

“S-Sachi-san!? You were supposed to be trapped in the water storage room...”

“I kind of went berserk in the water and the ceiling collapsed. So, I could breathe again and used random teleportation magic to come back.”

Upon closer look, Sachi was completely drenched. Water dripped from her silver hair and school uniform, and she shivered audibly as she felt the cold air in the residential area.

Plum, frozen in ice, also froze with a surprised expression upon realizing Sachi was alive. Mil let out a sigh of relief while glancing at Plum.

“Getting lucky enough for the ceiling to collapse, your ‘luck’ remains the same.”

“But I drank quite a bit of water, so I couldn’t cast magic immediately. I wanted to come back quickly because Mil was in danger.”

Sachi said so, looking at Plum, who was frozen in ice, and let out a relieved sigh as well.

“Well, it seems that worry was unnecessary. Mil, you won by yourself.”

“...Yes.”

The sense of growth washed over Mil once again, and she couldn't help but smile. On the other hand, seeing Mil covered in wounds, Sachi immediately used complete healing magic on her. Placing her hand on his slightly shorter blue hair, she healed her injuries with the effect of her healing magic.

It was almost like an older sister praising her younger sister.

While doing that, Plum, frozen in ice, was squirming and trying to break free from the restraints.

“Damn it...! Damn it...! With something like this, I...!”

“...?”

Watching Plum, who could only move her head and above, Mil calmly spoke.

“Plum-chan, surrender peacefully.”

“Huh?”

“We've won this battle. The other soldiers have already lost their will to fight, and the Mistral as an organization has already collapsed.”

The intentions of Plum, the formidable enemy who was the last

stronghold, had changed due to her knocking out the top-ranked mage Vergue Galan. Now, even Plum was rendered powerless by Mil's awakening.

The only things remaining were the storage area on the fourth floor, now a warehouse, and the research area on the fifth floor for magical tools.

They had run out of ways to stop the mages.

“Don't jump to conclusions...! Mistral hasn't lost yet. I haven't, even for a moment, thought of myself as defeated by you...!”

Saying so, Plum started gathering all her strength once more.

She was trying to move her limbs with all her might to break the ice restraining her.

But the ice remained unaffected.

The ice wall, created by a magic value of 350, had become incredibly hard due to the magical charge it had. Despite Plum's superhuman strength gained from physical enhancements, she couldn't break this ice wall with physical strength alone.

“Haa...! Haa...! Haa...!”

At that moment, Sachi made the finishing move.

“The dice are cast—God's guidance—If you hold a grudge, hold it against your own destiny—Twist of Fate, ForTuna—”

“Ugh...!”

A binding magic that immobilizes the opponent through probability—Twist of Fate, ForTuna.

And with that, Plum was completely unable to move.

Mil released the unnecessary ice and supported Plum as she collapsed onto the ground weakly. Although Plum should have been immobilized by Sachi's binding magic, she still sensed a lingering will to resist from Plum.

"Please, Plum-chan, stop. If you continue..."

"You think you can make me stop?!"

While her entire body tensed up, Plum squeezed her voice from deep within her throat.

"Having someone I hate so much right in front of me, someone I despise to the point of wanting to kill, there's no way I can stop...! You don't know how much suffering I've endured...!"

"..."

Hearing Plum's angry voice near her ear, Mil clenched her lips quietly.

And as if accepting her own mistakes, she listened to Plum's continued words.

"Being dragged into your misfortune, I experienced so much pain...!"

"I'm sorry."

"Mocked by those around me, left with no choice but to give up on my dreams, I was left empty...!"

"I'm sorry."

“And yet you’re happily attending the magical academy, making ‘new friends’ even...!”

Even though she couldn’t move her body, Plum weakly gripped Mil’s shoulder and vented her anger.

“And on top of that, you’re trying to become what I wanted to be...! I can’t forgive something like that.”

“I’m... sorry.”

Being told that, she felt it once again.

That she had taken away Plum’s dreams.

That she had caused her so much pain.

And yet, she was striving to become what she aspired to be.

Her anger was entirely justified.

“I believe it’s something that can’t be forgiven. No matter how much I try to make amends, this sin of mine cannot be fully redeemed.”

Facing Plum’s anger head-on, Mil let his guilt seep through.

No matter what she did from now on, she knew she couldn’t be forgiven by Plum.

She could never return to the close relationship they had as childhood friends, the way they used to be.

Even if she wished for it, she knew it was an unattainable goal.

So, Mil...

“Still, at least for the people I’ve inadvertently dragged into my own misfortune, I want to help them with my own hands. Not to earn forgiveness, but as a lesson to the version of myself who could only rely on others...”

Mil’s reason for aspiring to become a National Mage was to earn the money for her mother’s treatment and for Plum’s sake.

She aimed to become a National Mage to find a way to heal Plum’s body, which could no longer use magic.

Although Plum rejected her idealistic words, Mil’s determination remained unchanged.

No matter how much anger is vented at her, no matter how much she’s berated, Mil will continue walking the path of a mage for Plum’s sake.

Mil wrapped her arms around Plum’s back and pulled her into a gentle hug.

“For being like an older sister to me all this time, thank you. I promise I will find a way to heal your magical essence. Until then, please wait patiently.”

“...”

From then on, Plum fell silent.

Even after Mil laid her down on the ground, she didn’t make eye contact, simply biting her lips in silence.

Mil had nothing more to say to her at that moment.

And then...

“Are both of you okay!?”

From the entrance to the third-floor residential area, the National Mages returned.

Several mages from the Northern Assault Team ran toward Sachi and Mil, and their eyes widened as they saw the fallen Plum.

“C-Could it be that just you two managed to subdue this girl...!?”

“Well, I didn’t do much. Mil did everything...”

“No, if it were just me alone, it probably wouldn’t have gone well.”

The mages stared in astonishment at the two of them, continuing their modest exchanges.

“O-Oh my, I’m surprised. I thought you were still in the midst of battle...”

“In any case, you really did well. No, I’m truly sorry.”

“Leaving such a dangerous task to the two of you students...”

“No, it’s perfectly fine...”

Sachi and Mil noticed that there were only a few mages present, and they tilted their heads in confusion.

The mages answered the unspoken question.

“The others managed to escape the hideout unharmed.”

“The mages from the Mistral soldiers who were waiting outside handled things, and they’re preparing for the detainees.”

“That’s why we, mages with some magical essence to spare, returned to the third floor. Sorry for being late.”

“N-No, we weren’t badly injured, so...”

As a result of this battle, there hadn’t been any casualties so far.

Some had suffered severe injuries, but there were no fatalities.

Realizing this once again, the mages heaved sighs of relief, exchanged glances, and nodded in agreement.

“Now all that’s left is to go to the lowest level, the research area, and halt the completion of the magical beast invasion tools.”

“Though our numbers are a bit thin, let’s head there with everyone.”

Sachi and Mil also nodded and agreed to the proposal.

Not only the Mistral soldiers, but even Plum, who had been the greatest obstacle, had been rendered powerless.

What remained was to prevent the completion of the main objective of this attack, the magical beast invasion tools.

Based on their advance information, there were no more obstacles ahead. If they went to the fifth floor research area and halted the research, victory would be theirs.

The success of the assault mission was now within reach, and the National Mages all wore smiles.

At that moment...

“You don’t need to do that, you know?”

Suddenly, a woman’s voice echoed from the staircase leading to the fourth-floor storage area.

As everyone turned their attention to the source of the sound, a figure climbed up the stairs, the sound of heels clicking against the floor.

Gray, emotionless eyes that didn’t convey any feeling, coupled with long gray hair.

Pale, bloodless skin, and a large dress predominantly in white.

This woman, with an eerie presence that seemed almost ghostly...

Amid the questioning glances of those present, she abruptly disclosed a shocking truth.

“The magical beast invasion has already begun.”

Chapter 97

Beginning of the Nightmare

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Has the Demon Beast Invasion begun?”

The momentary relief after finally subduing the threat known as Plum was short-lived. A mysterious woman suddenly appeared and spoke astonishing words before us. Naturally, the magicians present at this scene collectively tilted their heads in confusion.

“W-What gibberish are you talking about?”

“Just who are you, anyway?”

“Oh my, how rude of me. I’ve been so remiss in introducing myself,” the woman, dressed like a ghost, gently lifted the edges of her white dress and made a slight bending motion at the knees as she responded.

“Nice to meet you all. I am currently the head of the Anti-Magic Society Mistral, and my name is Aliment Alumette.”

“Aliment...!?”

Everyone, including me and Mil, widened our eyes in recognition. Aliment Alumette, a name we had heard in advance.

The current leader of the Anti-Magic Society Mistral, she had led dissatisfied soldiers from the magic-centric nation, causing significant incidents repeatedly.

To think she would appear here in person was beyond our expectations.

“Aliment-sama... I apologize...”

“Well, I certainly didn’t imagine you would end up defeated like this.”

As she looked at Plum lying on the ground, Aliment lowered her gaze with a touch of sadness. But she quickly lifted her face and shook her head with a gentle smile.

“However, there’s no need to apologize. While you all were keeping the national magicians occupied, the ‘Doomsday Flute’ has been successfully completed.”

“What...!?”

The Doomsday Flute, completed...? I recall hearing that it was a magical tool designed to trigger the invasion of the demon beasts.

“Since it seems you haven’t grasped the situation, let me explain once again. Unfortunately, you were too late. While you were trying to hold back the national magicians, orders have already been sent to the ferocious demon beasts near the capital, commanding them to ‘begin the invasion of the capital, Blossom.’”

“Do you really think we’d believe such nonsense...!?”

“Well, if you think it’s a joke, that’s fine. Even as you are here like this, the demon beasts across various regions that heard the sound of the flute are already making their way toward the capital, Blossom. They’re coming to overrun the residents and magicians there.”

Beneath Aliment’s gentle smile, a sudden sense of unease emerged. It seemed like everyone else felt the same fear, with strained expressions and beads of cold sweat.

The demon beast invasion starting already was too early, by any measure. According to the information we had, there should have been more time. While the interference from Mistral’s soldiers and

Plum had bought us a considerable amount of time, the magical tool should have required more days to complete.

Could it be misinformation? Or did the development progress more smoothly than anticipated, resulting in an earlier completion?

No, that didn't seem to be the case...

Suddenly, the Doomsday Flute shattered in Aliment's hand.

"What...!?"

"Well, it seems it happened after all. If I had a bit more time for adjustments, it would have turned out more ideally. But it seems fate had other plans."

The Doomsday Flute had broken. That magical tool was now unusable.

From Aliment's demeanor, it seemed she hadn't expected it to break after just one use. The flute, while claimed to be completed, was far from perfect. It had been put together hastily due to our attack, rushing its development. As a result, the demon beast invasion had been initiated with an unfinished flute.

While fortunate in its own unfortunate way, the fact remained that the demon beast invasion had still begun.

"Oh, I'm looking forward to it. The pitiful magicians who were arrogant about their magical powers will be mercilessly slaughtered by rampaging demon beasts. Soon, the capital, Blossom, will be covered in the flesh and blood of its residents and magicians."

Perhaps imagining that scene, Aliment's pale face took on a faint flush of excitement.

At this rate, everyone in the capital and the magical academy was in

danger. While the national magicians of the defense force were stationed in the city, the scale of the demon beast invasion was immeasurable. We had to find a way to stop it.

“Frozen Land of Niflheim!”

“What...!?”

Without any warning, ice spread across the ground. It advanced towards Aliment’s feet in the blink of an eye. Yet, she exhibited remarkable reflexes, leaping back to narrowly avoid the icy magical grasp.

Looking at the figure standing beside me, holding a staff in hand, the magicians gasped in astonishment.

“That... that was...”

“A non-verbal magic spell...!”

Indeed, Mill wasn’t currently chanting a spell. This meant that nobody could anticipate her use of magic, and the sudden rush of ice took everyone by surprise.

There had been no signs of her quietly chanting, and what just occurred was undoubtedly an advanced technique known as “non-verbal magic.”

Seeing this, I was both astonished and understood at the same time. The reason she had been able to defeat Plum on her own was that she had mastered non-verbal magic during the battle. She seemed filled with confidence and having learned non-verbal magic made sense.

Ducking the attack, Aliment still wore her gentle smile, though her eyes held an unsettling gaze fixed on Mill.

“Oh dear, it seems someone here has quite a fierce temperament.”

“Stop the demon beast invasion immediately, or...”

Mill narrowed her eyes while pointing her staff toward Aliment.

Without showing any signs of being phased by the threat, Aliment calmly shook her head.

“Unfortunately, it doesn’t seem possible to fulfill your request.”

“Why?”

“The demon beast invasion that has already begun is beyond my power to stop. It was designed that way.”

Once it had started, not even Aliment, the mastermind, could halt it. This design likely took into account the possibility of her being captured and forced to halt the invasion by magicians. If her goal was simply to destroy the magic-centric nation without regard, then it was indeed a clever approach.

“However, I still need to capture you. If you cooperate quietly, I won’t resort to any harsh measures...”

“Ugh, it’s truly regrettable, but fulfilling that wish might prove difficult.”

Aliment playfully traced her chin with a fingertip, making a show of her mock concern.

“It’s quite disappointing not to witness the long-awaited demon beast invasion we’ve been yearning for, only to be thrown into prison without seeing it unfold.”

“So what will you do then?”

As Mill questioned her, the other national magicians also fixed their sharp gazes on Aliment. Was there a way for her to escape this situation? Despite having depleted our strength considerably through repeated fierce battles, we still outnumbered her significantly. The advantage remained with the magicians.

Even Plum, who was supposed to be her last hope, had been captured just as Mill's efforts led to.

Yet, Aliment exuded an air of nonchalance and confidence. What was she thinking?

With all of us on high alert, she once again reached into her chest. From there, she retrieved a single "card" and smiled quietly.

"T-That's...!"

I recognized it. The feeling of it was still faintly etched in my memory. It was the "Instant Teleportation magical tool"

that Plum had used to send me to the water storage room in the fourth layer.

Could it be...

"——!"

A sense of dread washed over me, and I swiftly propelled myself off the ground toward Aliment. Mill realized a moment later and extended a light blue magic circle at the tip of her staff.

But...

Suddenly, a massive black wolf leaped out from behind Aliment.

"Gaaaah!"

“Sachi-san!”

A massive claw descended from above, and I quickly leaped backward in alarm. I narrowly evaded the black wolf’s attack, but now there were multiple groups of demon beasts standing before Aliment.

“Grrooo!”

“We won’t allow anyone to interfere with Lady Aliment!”

Behind those demon beasts were several figures in white attire, glaring at us. These were likely the researchers who had been involved in magical tool development in the lowermost layer. It seemed they were manipulating the demon beasts through some means, but their complexion was off. They appeared unnaturally pale, showing noticeable signs of fatigue and clouded consciousness.

Collars resembling necklaces were fastened around the demon beasts’ necks, and all the researchers wore wristbands of similar shape. These wristbands seemed to be magical tools controlling the demon beasts’ consciousness, with side effects manifesting as physical discomfort.

“Then, I shall head to the festival grounds first. While I hoped to bring Plum along, it seems that will be difficult.”

While the researchers and the horde of demon beasts kept us occupied, Aliment waved her hand toward us. It appeared she had come to check on the situation but quickly realized she wouldn’t be able to take Plum with her.

“W-Wait!”

Ignoring our attempts to stop her, Aliment pressed the card against her chest. Instantly, her ghostly form vanished from our sight. A teleportation via magical tool. Her words suggested she had headed to the capital, but could she really accomplish such a long-distance teleportation? The true extent of magical tool capabilities was unknown.

However, where Aliment had gone wasn't crucial at this moment. Our priority was confirming if the demon beast invasion had truly begun.

"Go! Evil Wolf Ibile Wolf!"

"Tear apart these detestable magicians!"

To do that, we needed to suppress the researchers and the horde of demon beasts.

"Do not let these demon beasts get outside!"

"There are many injured people resting on the upper floors! We must exterminate them at all costs!"

If we fled upstairs, the injured individuals resting at the entrance would be endangered. There were still many demon beasts pouring in from below, so we couldn't let a single one through.

In reality, we didn't have time to deal with these demon beasts, but the situation left us with no choice but to fight.

"[The enemy is right here—Crimson Blaze—gather into a sphere of flames]—Flame Sphere!"

One of the national magicians attempted to intercept the black wolf with fire magic. Being a recognized magician of the nation, their magic carried considerable power, but...

"Gaaah!"

"——!"

The black wolf didn't flinch and leaped straight at them, extinguishing

the flames with ease. It then brought down its menacing claws on the magician.

“[Rose of Icy Blossom—Rose Noel]!”

Mil reacted, rapidly firing icy tendrils using non-verbal magic. The black wolf couldn't evade this attack from its blind spot, and its body was quickly ensnared in the tendrils, freezing it completely.

“Th-Thank you, that saved me!”

“These demon beasts are even more aggressive and significantly more powerful than usual! Be cautious!”

As Mil warned, the black wolf started breaking free from the icy restraints, its struggles shattering the icy tendrils.

Indeed, it was much stronger than typical demon beasts. This scenario felt somewhat familiar. It was likely that the researchers had used magical tools to enhance these demon beasts.

...If it were an ordinary magician.

“[Life or death—Grim Reaper's Scythe—take down the enemy in a single stroke]—Death's Notice!”

The black wolf, attempting to break free from the icy bonds, found itself targeted by my abyssal hand. In an instant, ominous black light enveloped the wolf, silencing its incessant howling.

“Gu... gaaah...!”

Immediately, the black wolf collapsed onto the ground, its massive body now motionless.

“Evil Wolf Ibile Wolf...”

“Defeated in just one hit...”

The researchers stared at us with astonished expressions. The national magicians by their side wore similar looks as I stood with my right hand extended.

“If it’s demon beasts, I won’t hold back.”

Now, it was my turn. To quickly defeat the demon beasts here so we could return to the capital as soon as possible.

Shifting my gaze to the next target, I muttered under my breath.

Chapter 98

The Terrifying Threat to Everyday Life

/ Level 999 / By IX

Capital City Blossom, Royal Harvest Academy of Magical Arts.

There, the tranquil scenes of ordinary classes continued to unfold just as usual.

The aspiring young mages, who aimed to become national sorcerers, were deepening their knowledge and experiences, taking stronger steps towards their dreams.

Amidst this, two female students were away from the classroom scenes, residing in the infirmary.

“We should probably return soon, or the teacher might get angry.”

“Ugh...”

A chestnut-haired girl sat up on the bed, and a blonde-haired girl plopped onto the bed from the side, sprawling lazily on the blonde girl’s lap.

They were Maron Melange and Poire Mule, both belonging to Class A of the first year.

Although Maron was the one supposed to be sick in bed, for some reason, it was Poire who sounded (or rather, looked) more uncomfortable.

“If it’s about me, you really don’t need to worry so much. My strength hasn’t fully returned to the point where I can run around, but my condition has greatly improved, as you can see,” Maron said while

clenching her fists slightly in front of her chest.

During the Starflower Festival competition, Maron had been injured by the rampaging Maiss Glaciere. Although her wounds had been healed by her classmate, Sachi, the restoration magic couldn't bring back her lost strength. She had been advised to rest for a while. Additionally, concerns about the aftermath of being injured by the rampaging individual lingered. They were monitoring whether there were any effects on her magical essence or changes in her health.

However, now that her condition had fully recovered and no anomalies were detected, she was expected to be discharged within the next few days.

And yet, her friend Poire had been coming to the infirmary diligently since the day of the incident and continued to do so today, with an unusually long stay.

"Lunch break ended a while ago, and you've been here for about the length of one class period, but is it really okay for you to skip class?" Maron inquired.

"...We should probably make sure you're resting on a bed where Maron can remain calm and feel comfortable," Poire mumbled as she buried her head in the bed.

Normally, she would visit during the morning before classes started and during the lunch break. She would stay with Maron until the last moment before classes began and then reluctantly leave. However, today, even after lunch break had ended, she remained glued to Maron's side in the infirmary.

As if confessing her reason in a self-explanatory manner, Poire continued.

"Today, Sachi and Mil are both absent."

"Well, I see. I heard that Sachi-san has been busy these past two

weeks, but Mil-san is absent as well. Could it be that without your close companions around, you don't feel like going to class?"

"...", Poire responded in silence.

With a nod that was almost like a confession, she acknowledged it.

Unlike Mil, Poire had a different kind of shyness around people. She loathed interacting thoroughly with unfamiliar individuals. And when her close companions weren't nearby, her emotions would become restless and unsettled.

Since Maron became unable to attend classes, Poire had been spending more time near Sachi or Mil when she was in the classroom. Being with those two helped her calm down her emotions. Unfortunately, both of them were absent today.

It seemed that both of them had left early in the morning for some task, leaving Poire to spend a lonely day. Maron vividly remembered how Poire had hurriedly taken refuge in the infirmary during lunch break.

"Are you still finding it a bit challenging to get along with your classmates?"

"Yeah. It's not that I dislike them, but talking to them is really tiring."

Poire gently held the blanket draped over Maron's lap and then envisioned the figures of the two girls in her mind.

"I guess it's just easier to talk to Sachi and Mil."

"Even so, you can't skip class just because those two aren't here."

"Yeah..."

Poire looked down apologetically.

Seeing her humble demeanor, Maron smiled and affectionately patted Poire's head.

“...But, it's not just that.”

“Huh?”

“It's because the two of them are absent that things feel unsettled here.”

“Unsettled...?”

Poire placed her hand on her chest.

Seeing her do so, Maron tilted her head, and Poire continued with a sense of unease.

“I don't really understand it well, but probably... I have a feeling that something... not good is going to happen.”

It was a vague and fluffy premonition. Poire possessed an inexplicable power that she couldn't explain even to herself.

Whenever some kind of discomfort arose in her body, disasters seemed to unfold around her. It was as if Poire's body itself sensed impending calamity and warned of danger. It was a type of precognition that differed from sensing magic –

a unique ability rooted in her constitution.

While her magical essence was involved, Poire herself was unaware of this power. It was a remarkably ambiguous and unstable power.

However, recently, Poire had started to become aware of her precognitive ability. She hadn't fully grasped it yet, but the recent

Starflower Festival had prompted her to realize this power. When Maron was injured by Maiss, she had felt a fluttering sensation in her chest just before the incident occurred.

Similar occurrences had happened since she was young, and now, in Maron's time of crisis, Poire could strongly sense unease in her chest. This led her to think in a certain way.

("When I feel unease in my chest, something bad might happen...")

This was her vague understanding of the situation.

And now, once again, Poire was experiencing the same sensation.

"So, you've been worrying about me and watching over me because of this?"

"...Yes."

Unable to articulate her feelings properly, Poire buried her face in the blanket again, looking perplexed.

On the other hand, Maron, who wasn't aware of Poire's power, smiled quietly.

"If it's about me, I've truly fully recovered. So please don't worry so much."

"Ugh..."

Since Poire's words were somewhat incomplete, Maron didn't take it too seriously. She likely believed that the recent unrest around them was causing Poire to feel unsettled, which was why she was acting this way.

It felt like the sensation of a daughter telling her mother she saw a ghost and not being believed. Poire was experiencing a similar feeling.

At that moment—

“Command to all within the academy.”

“Huh?”

Suddenly, a familiar female voice echoed in their minds.

The voice conveyed a sense of integrity and strictness, yet it also held a gentle aura. It was the voice of the academy head, Ananas Clostata.

“At this moment, multiple magical beasts have formed a group and are approaching the capital city from the surrounding magical beast zones. Evacuation orders have already been issued to the town, and please be aware in advance that our academy will be opened as a shelter.”

“A group of magical beasts...”

Maron and Poire exchanged anxious glances.

This was happening just as Poire had said, “Something not good might happen.”

The shock and surprise of the two were only natural.

“And I command all the students of this academy to remain within the academy premises. Everyone should follow the instructions of their respective instructors and behave calmly.”

Maron and Poire felt a surge of tension between them after receiving this message.

The invasion of a group of magical beasts. The fact that the anti-magic organization Mistral was planning a magical beast invasion wasn't public knowledge. The measures taken against it by the national mages were being carried out in secret.

However, the capital city had been enveloped by an odd atmosphere recently. Some individuals had noticed it, especially the capable students of the prestigious magical academy.

Maron and Poire were among those students.

With the revelation of the true nature of this unease, the two felt a sense of anxiety.

"Could it be related to why Sachi-sama and Mill-sama are absent?"

"...", Poire pondered silently while watching Maron, who had a troubled expression.

Since much hadn't been disclosed, they didn't know more than this. Poire quietly contemplated.

They were ordered to remain within the academy premises, so following that command would be the best course of action. Certainly, by staying here, they would be protected by the barriers set up by the academy head and the instructors. Therefore, staying quietly with Maron in the infirmary would be safe.

However...

"...Maron, please continue resting here."

"Huh?"

Poire, who hadn't moved at all because she didn't want to return to class, suddenly lifted her heavy body and dashed towards the infirmary door.

“Wh-where are you going, Poire-san?”

Naturally, Maron was puzzled and called out to Poire’s back. Despite the command to remain within the academy premises, Poire seemed to be heading somewhere.

Her bold action was surprising, but what was even more shocking was that Poire had initiated this movement on her own. Until now, she hadn’t done anything unless instructed or forced to.

The fact that she was now attempting something of her own accord was incredibly shocking for Maron, who had observed her since childhood.

(“At this rate, things might turn out badly.”)

Safety was guaranteed as long as they stayed within the academy. Maron understood that. However, Poire’s chest continued to flutter more intensely, as if it was a precursor indicating that something bad was bound to happen. Maron was sure that unless Poire did something herself, this restlessness wouldn’t subside.

With that thought in mind, Poire decided to leave the infirmary, following the sensation in her chest.

“Maron, I won’t let anyone disturb your rest... Stay here with peace of mind.”

“...,” Maron remained silent.

Leaving these words for her best friend, Poire rushed down the corridor.

Originally, she wanted to stay by Maron’s side and protect her. However, she also considered that if she wasn’t careful, she might end up attracting misfortune. In that case, it would be safer to entrust

Maron's safety to the teachers.

Furthermore, there was another concern: the absence of Sachi and Mil. Both of them were absent at the same time as the magical beasts invaded the academy grounds, almost as if it was coordinated. Perhaps this unease in Poire's chest wasn't a sign of danger for Maron but rather a sign of trouble for those two.

Due to these reasons, Poire left the infirmary to go to the main gate of the town to see what was happening.

The sleeping princess had awakened and was now running for her friend's sake.

Chapter 99

Iron Hammer of the Sleeping Princess

/ Level 999 / By IX

Tap-tap-tap, a small yellow figure crosses the streets of the royal capital.

Following the restlessness in her chest, Poire Mule is diligently making her way to the main gate with short strides.

Passing by the residents running towards the opposite side of the academy, her ears are assaulted by screams mixed with commotion.

As if to drown it out, she can hear groans that seem to come from magical beasts in the distance.

This only accelerated the residents' sense of urgency even more.

In contrast, the restlessness that had plagued Poire seems to have considerably faded since her time in the infirmary.

Almost as if it's affirming that this course of action is correct.

Encouraged by this, she increases her speed while running and soon the destination's main gate comes into view.

“Wow...”

Poire involuntarily grimaces.

Numerous forms of magical beasts are already visible in front of the main gate.

They are small-sized species with not very high levels of danger, but a significant number of them have gathered at this location.

Individuals who appear to be national magicians are countering them with magic, turning the area in front of the gate into a full-fledged battlefield.

“Can’t we redirect more people towards the gate side?”

“It’s impossible! There’s a huge number gathering towards the back’s southern gate!”

“It seems the magicians from the eastern and western gates have also started combat and can’t be spared!”

Apparently, battles have begun not just at the main gate, which is the northern gate, but also around the outskirts of the royal capital.

It seems the manpower of the national magicians isn’t sufficient, as they’re struggling to deal with even the small-sized magical beasts.

Moreover, from a distance, swarms of even more magical beasts are approaching one after another.

And among these, there are considerably larger and troublesome species compared to the small ones that have gathered here.

“Gwaaahhh!!!”

Glistening scales, a massive body held aloft by gigantic wings.

Sharp claws and teeth, and from the terrifying mouth, bursts of fiery breath roar out.

Among magical beasts, a particularly aggressive and dangerous

species...

“...Dragonkin.”

They are often considered the mightiest species; the dragonkin magical beasts are closing in while flapping their wings.

“Hey, those dangerous ones are coming!”

“Can’t the assault team magicians still be contacted!?”

Naturally, the magicians who see such magical beasts display even more anxious expressions.

Currently, they are already struggling against a massive horde of small-sized magical beasts...

Moreover, if these troublesome dragonkin show up, the frontline will surely collapse.

There likely isn’t a magician in this group capable of shooting down those dragonkin, so if things continue like this, the royal capital will be invaded, and the city will be mercilessly destroyed.

Just like the “Great Calamity” that occurred in the royal capital twelve years ago.

“I won’t let that happen.”

To protect the cherished place where her friends are, Poire bursts out from under the main gate and into the battlefield.

“What in the world are you doing!? Ordinary citizens should quickly head to the magical academy...”

Seeing Poire’s figure, the magician mistakenly assumes she’s an

ordinary citizen due to her youthful appearance.

And even though he's trying to urge him to take refuge at the magical academy...

Without stepping back, Poire starts chanting in the center of the battlefield.

“[Sinner Trembling—Thunder God in the Sky—Nowhere to escape]”

The restlessness in her chest vanishes.

Instead, a hot power surges within her.

Right now, she feels like she won't lose to anyone else.

(Maron's rest won't be disturbed by anyone...!)

As the hand of evil approaches her friend, it awakens the wrath of the Sleeping Princess.

“[Hammer of the Gods' Fury, Mjolnir]”

In an instant, pale blue lightning struck the approaching giant dragons in the royal capital.

White lightning that looked like a massive pillar capable of swallowing even the huge bodies of the dragons with ease.

A tremendous flash and deafening roar scattered in all directions in an instant, causing the magicians to instinctively shield their faces.

After a while, as they opened their eyes, they could see the giant dragons being brought down.

“W-What kind of magic was that just now?”

“Did that child... do that?”

The astonished gazes of the national magicians turned towards the small girl wearing a nightcap.

The spell was a lightning strike magic known as “[Hammer of the Gods’ Fury, mjolnir],” which hits targets within its effect range centered around the magicians. Its effect range and magical power vary based on the magician’s magic value.

Normally, even with Poire’s magic value of 255, she wouldn’t achieve such destructive power. However, if she uses it now, she can transform it into a devastating lightning magic that can bring down the giant dragons she sees in the distance with a single strike.

The reason for this lies in her unique magical essence. Her magical essence is “yellow,” and she excels in lightning-based magic due to her innate talent. However, typically, even with a magic value of 255, Poire wouldn’t generate this level of destructive force.

So why were the giant dragons in the distance brought down to the ground?

(For some reason, I’m not feeling that sleepy right now...)

The answer is simple. Poire’s current magic value isn’t “255” or anything like that—it has risen to an astonishing “380.” A truly extraordinary and unprecedented magic value that far exceeds even that of the Mill.

Usually, a person’s magic value is determined at birth and is considered unchangeable. However, in Poire’s case, her

“constitution” is the factor causing her magic value to change.

Her magical essence is always linked to “sleep,” much like the state when Sachi uses the spell “[Lullaby of Repose, Ulus Siesta].” However, she isn’t fully asleep; it’s more like a half-drowsy state, where her consciousness is only half-present.

While she can hear incantations, she can’t fully unleash her maximum power—a state of instability.

As a result, even if she recites the spell phrases, the magic becomes half-hearted and incomplete, resulting in a measured magic value of 255. In other words, Poire is an exceptional talent who can demonstrate her true potential with a magic value of 380 only under specific conditions...

“[Sinner Trembling—Thunder God in the Sky—Nowhere to escape]”

Sachi, with her extraordinary luck value of 999, reliably succeeds with probability-based magic. Mil, with her non-incantation magic, frequently launches high-powered magic, demonstrating a stable presence. Maron, skilled at skillfully using various magic, excels in strategic thinking.

Though they have their own shortcomings, when looking solely at explosive power...

She, too, is one of the exceptional magicians defying conventional standards.

“[Hammer of the Gods’ Fury, mjolnir]”

Once again, Poire activates her lightning strike magic, and lightning strikes the giant magical beasts seen in the distance.

Intense sound and light flash continuously, and immediately after, the impact of the giant magical beasts crashing to the ground is felt at their feet.

The astounding range of effect and the power of a single blow.

“W-Who is she...?”

“Anyway, let’s take this chance! While she’s holding back the giant magical beasts, we’ll deal with the smaller ones around us!”

With Poire’s entrance, the atmosphere of despair instantly changes, and the magicians regain their vigor.

Due to Poire stopping not only the giant magical beasts but also the small magical beasts within visible range, they find themselves significantly more maneuverable.

Poire’s physical condition is also remarkably good.

Her magical essence has currently transitioned from a half-drowsy state to an awakened state, causing the restlessness in her chest to completely disappear.

The magical essence in her half-drowsy state is more easily influenced by her surroundings, which sometimes gives the host a sense of discomfort.

“Something feels restless around here...”

That’s precisely the true nature of the restlessness Poire was feeling in her chest.

Gradually awakening from its half-drowsy state due to influences from her surroundings, her magical essence was causing the chest restlessness.

The turmoil resulted from Maiss’s magical essence going awry, which triggered an over-sensitive reaction from Poire’s magical essence.

With the commotion caused by the humans and animals around due to the magical beast invasion, the restlessness grew closer to an

awakened state.

Unintentionally, this unrest served as a prophetic ability.

(My head feels clear... I can hear everyone's voices well...)

Furthermore, due to her constitution, Poire's "physical condition" is easily influenced by her "magical essence." This is also why she always appears drowsy. Currently, since her magical essence is in an awakened state, her drowsiness has disappeared.

Amazed at her unusually good condition, Poire continued to summon lightning pillars down upon the distant magical beasts.

"Gguaaahhhh!!!"

"...?"

However, due to her limited knowledge, she could only monotonously repeat the same spell.

She struggled with identifying which magic was effective against each magical beast, and there were quite a few she couldn't defeat due to her inability to judge.

Additionally, she had some memory difficulties, and she remembered very few of the incantation phrases.

Therefore, when she encountered magical beasts that her lightning-based magic wasn't effective against, Poire found herself breaking out in a cold sweat.

"What should I do..."

Other magicians were occupied with the smaller magical beasts around them.

Even if she were to join in and swiftly deal with the smaller ones, there were no other magicians who could take over the large magical beasts in her place.

Furthermore, not only giant dragonkin magical beasts but also magical beasts that burrowed into the ground and approached or those that turned invisible and attacked from behind were beginning to appear. This placed them in a significantly disadvantaged position.

At present, which magical beast to deal with and what magic to use for optimal results—Poire didn't possess the discretion necessary to comprehend this complex battle situation.

And then...

"Um, you there, with the nightcap...?"

"...?"

Suddenly, she heard a voice coming from somewhere.

It felt as if someone was speaking directly into her mind.

Looking around, she realized she was the only one wearing a nightcap while fighting, making it unmistakably her that the voice was addressing.

Poire scanned the area, searching for the source of the voice, but she couldn't find anyone matching the description.

Judging by the voice, she thought it might be an older sister figure, but...

"Uh, right here! I'm directly above you."

“Above...?”

When she heard that, Poire raised her head and blinked her sleepy eyes in surprise at what she saw in her field of vision.

The voice’s source was indeed directly above her.

However, the figure wasn’t the older sister she had imagined. In fact, it wasn’t even a human...

Fluttering its wings, there was a single “owl” dancing in the air.

“If you don’t mind, could I ask for your name?”

“...?”

In an unprecedented situation of being addressed by an owl, Poire stared with her small mouth agape.

Chapter 100

Wisdom of the Sage

/ Level 999 / By IX

Mulburry Malmurard was stationed in the capital city, preparing for a reenactment of a major disaster.

Honestly, she thought the likelihood of another major disaster occurring was low.

The government had sent an attack squad to Mistral's hiding place, so she hoped they would prevent it in advance.

However, the invasion of magical beasts happened once again.

(Truly, the same major disaster as back then...)

Mulburry watched the invasion of magical beasts from above the capital city, feeling her blood run cold.

The recurrence of a significant event where she had been suspected as the cause.

The shocking scene from that time and the cries of the people naturally came to her mind.

That tragedy must never be repeated.

(If I don't hurry and stop it, the town will collapse...!)

From what she could see, the strength of the national mages had improved since before, and there were capable individuals among them.

However, the magnitude of the major disaster seemed even greater, and the frontline would definitely not hold up if things continued like this.

With that in mind, Mulburry worked hard to assist the mages.

(Hoo-hoo, could you lend me control of the body for a little while?)

“Hoo-hoo.”

Until today, she had been pondering if there was something she could do herself.

Even in the form of this owl, could she do something for everyone?

Currently, she inhabited the body of an owl, not a human's, having transferred her soul into it.

Using the body of Hoo-hoo, which the government regularly sent over, she had slipped out of the Forest of sinners without permission.

As a result, she had to act as the owl for anything she wanted to do.

She couldn't use magic, let alone communicate with others.

So Mulburry...

(Cheeks faintly colored—voices without revealing the voice—carry my feelings, unrevealed: “Ephemeral Confession Éphémère J'taime!”)

In an attempt to communicate with someone else as an owl, she tried to cast magic without chanting.

In this form, she was useless.

Coordinating with someone else, or even casting spells properly, was beyond her ability.

But if she could establish mental communication, she could assist in battle with the vast knowledge of magic she had accumulated as a mage.

Hoo-hoo couldn't speak human language, but a small amount of mana resided within it, making it theoretically possible to cast a non-verbal magic spell by conveying incantation phrases in her mind.

And Mulburry, although she couldn't consistently succeed, had experience with non-verbal magic.

"Uh, uh, can you hear me, miss over there?"

"Huh?"

Passing by a mother and daughter on the streets of the capital city heading towards the magic academy for refuge.

When she mentally addressed the girl who was holding hands with her mother, the girl showed a reaction as if she had noticed.

It seemed that the telepathic magic had worked properly.

Frankly, she had been more anxious about whether the magic powered by Hoo-hoo's mana would work than about non-verbal casting.

There were many forms of telepathic magic.

Some were used by the attack squad for communication, and some were used by the academy head, Ananas, for contacting within the academy.

However, these spells had a wide range of effects or targeted a large number of people, resulting in high magical energy requirements and mana levels.

Hence, Mulburry chose a basic telepathic magic with a narrow range of effect, limited to one person.

(It seems like it succeeded safely.)

After witnessing the family heading towards the magic academy, Mulburry soared towards the main gate that had turned into a battlefield.

Now she could communicate with some mage.

All that remained was to find a mage who could realize her thoughts.

(Preferably, someone with high magical energy...)

With the knowledge she had accumulated as a mage, she would rescue this chaotic battlefield.

For that purpose, she needed to find someone with high magical energy and coordinate with them.

There were spells that demanded high magical energy, so finding someone who could succeed with all of them was desirable...

As Mulburry thought that, a massive pillar of lightning appeared in her field of vision.

(This... the power is incredible...!)

Given the characteristics of the magic, what just happened was probably the thunder magic “Divine Hammer of the Gods: mjolnir.” However, I’ve never seen anything with that much power before. The

magical energy required is so high that it almost seems like a different kind of magic altogether. The possessor likely has an estimated magical energy value of 300 or even more. However, seeing them using the same magic repeatedly makes me feel like their combat experience is still relatively shallow. With that much magical energy, they should be able to use more useful magic variations. Mulburry secretly felt frustrated, finding it wasteful.

(No, rather, they are an individual with plenty of potential.)

There's no one more suitable to impart the knowledge of mages to than them.

Mulburry accelerated her flight towards the magician who was the source of the lightning, Poire, to introduce herself.

This was the story of how Mulburry and Poire's encounter came about.

Mulburry looked at the bewildered girl and realized she was slightly behind.

"Oh, right, I should have introduced myself first."

If you suddenly ask for a name, it's natural to be surprised. Thinking so, she descended in front of Poire and introduced herself again.

"My name is Mulburry. Although I currently appear as an owl for certain reasons, I'm a genuine human being. I'm using telepathic magic to communicate right now."

"Hu-human...? Mind... communication...?"

Poire furrowed her brows, looking even more confused. There was no time for a lengthy explanation in the midst of the battlefield, so there was no other choice.

However, Poire wasn't good at dealing with complicated matters and quickly accepted Mulburry's explanation.

"...My name is Poire Mule."

"Poire-chan, huh? That's a very cute name."

After being told her name once again, Mulburry sensed the approach of a massive magical beast from a distance and quickly conveyed her message.

"Um, Poire-chan, I'm sorry for suddenly asking, but..."

"What?"

Mulburry's request was rather hasty, resulting in an incomplete plea.

Knowing she didn't have time for this, Mulburry continued hurriedly, not wanting to confuse or arouse suspicion.

"Well, I know this is sudden and it's not easy to understand, but could you use magic according to my instructions?"

"..."

Due to the urgency, her plea lacked details. Mulburry was aware of that and was anxious not to trouble Poire while trying to maintain secrecy.

"Okay, I understand."

"Uh?"

An unexpected immediate response. Mulburry, caught off guard, momentarily felt bewildered.

“You mean, if I use the magic the owl mentioned?”

“Yes, that’s right. I’d appreciate it if you could.”

“Got it, I’ll give it a try.”

Poire’s willingness to cooperate wasn’t the point. Mulburry realized this. It wasn’t about understanding her plea or being agreeable.

The fact that Poire agreed to use the magic so readily was surprising. Mulburry questioned this.

“Um, well, I know it’s my position to ask this, but isn’t it a little too easy for you to agree just like that?”

“Why?”

“Well, I mean, just looking at me, I look suspicious, right? Don’t you think I might be deceiving you or something?”

“Yeah, but this owl doesn’t seem like a bad owl, so I guess it’s fine.”

“Uh, it’s fine, you say...”

Since I have absolutely no intention of deceiving, it’s a huge relief to hear her say that... Yet, I can’t shake the feeling that I’m somehow tricking a young child, which makes me feel uncomfortable. If the roles were reversed, I’d definitely have been suspicious. Well, if she says it’s fine, then maybe it is. Mulburry silently convinced herself.

Moreover, judging by the fact that she’s wearing the uniform of the magic academy, she doesn’t seem to be the age her appearance suggests.

(Indeed, the magic academy seems to have many mysterious children.)

Even my beloved disciple Sach seems to be no exception.

Thinking this in secret, Mulburry lowered her head once again.

“Well then, please take care of me. Oh, and if possible, could you call me Mulburry instead of the owl?”

“Mr. Owl is here.”

“Huh?”

Mulburry looked back towards the battlefield. A dragon was approaching at a short distance.

Taken aback by this sight, Mulburry landed hastily on top of Poire’s nightcap.

“Sorry for landing on your head! Please continue the incantation after me!”

“Okay.”

If things continued like this, the enemy would break through the front lines and reach the main gate. The formidable foe was impervious to Poire’s lightning magic. Even the attacks of other mages using fire or water magic had no effect. They likely had resistance to magic attacks itself. In an instant, Mulburry analyzed the situation and exhausted the wisdom of a sage to the fullest.

“Shattered heart and blade—manifesting sword of hope—grant me victory and glory in my hands: ‘Immortal Sword Fran Belge!’”

After Mulburry's incantation, Poire began hers. A huge magic circle expanded above her, and a massive sword emerged from the center. The blade, contorted as if flames were flickering across it, was more eye-catching than its unique appearance. The sword's enormous size was awe-inspiring, seemingly capable of slicing the royal palace in the capital city in half. The surrounding mages were left speechless, gazing at the gigantic sword overhead.

Even Poire herself was astonished. The sword aimed its tip at the approaching dragon and swiftly flew towards it.

The colossal blade pierced through the dragon's scales, penetrating its flesh.

“Groooooooooaaaaarrrr!!!”

Not stopping there, the sword swung around as if wielded by an invisible swordsman, continuing to cut the dragon on its own.

As the dragon finally sank to the ground, the sword disappeared as if its mission was accomplished, vanishing like smoke.

In a mere eight seconds from its manifestation, the events transpired.

National mages, who had been in despair, were now astonished and speechless, as if they had forgotten their feelings.

Meanwhile, atop Poire's head, Mulburry was asked nonchalantly, “What was that magic just now?”

“That was a type of conjuration magic. It generates a physical sword using magical energy and is used to pierce through the most formidable threats, as determined. I assumed it would work since the magical attacks with specialized scales were all being blocked.”

Mulburry, who realized that magical attacks wouldn't work, chose a magic capable of physical attacks. If Poire's lightning magic, with its

immense power, couldn't damage the foe, then there had to be another weakness.

Her intuition was correct; the dragon had no resistance to slashing-type attacks.

Not only did she demonstrate keen insight, but also the depth of knowledge and experience befitting a sage, enabling her to devise the most suitable answer in this situation.

“What the...? What kind of magic was that just now?”

“That's the first time I've seen it.”

It's no wonder that no one here knows about this magic. Mulburry could hear the voice of mana with her mage's power and had accumulated countless incantation phrases as knowledge. Only a portion of it had been publicly disclosed, while most of it still resided only in her mind. Among those present, Mulburry alone could arrive at the best response for the situation. However, Mulburry herself was slightly taken aback.

“I knew it had an extraordinary amount of magical energy, but I never imagined it would be this much...”

The manifested sword was more than twice as large as she had envisioned, causing her eyes to widen in amazement.

She had chosen a magic that was suitable for the situation, but she felt that she was also saved by Poire's magical energy, even more so than expected.

As the two-person combination of the Sleeping Princess and the Sage attracted astonished gazes from the surrounding mages, they looked at the approaching horde of magical beasts and enthusiastically proclaimed:

“Now, let's keep going like this!”

“Sure thing!”

With Poire’s lackluster reply, the duo that would exist only for this day sprang into action.

Chapter 101

Ideal World

/ Level 999 / By IX

“...Hehe.”

In the northeastern district of Blossom, the royal capital, stands the bell tower of an abandoned church. Though it no longer serves its original purpose, the tower stands as the third tallest structure within the capital, often overlooked by many.

Thus, from its roof, one could gaze not only over the entirety of the capital but also to the outskirts of the town. And there stood a single figure.

“It feels somewhat remorseful, doesn’t it? To monopolize such a breathtaking view all to oneself.”

The head of the anti-magic society Mistral, Aliment Alumette, stood there. She had used Heimbeere, an infiltrator sent to the magic academy, to establish a teleportation point in this location. Having transported herself from the hidden underground labyrinth of her hideout to this spot, she now gazed upon the approaching horde of magical beasts with a triumphant smile.

The growls of enraged magical beasts, the pained cries of helpless townsfolk, and the resounding cacophony of battle noise drowned them all out. Amidst this symphony of sounds, how luxurious it was to enjoy this view from the best seat in the house.

It was evident that the royal capital, which was steadily becoming the heart of the magical nation, was inching closer to its demise. The joy that it was being accomplished by her own hands swelled within her.

“Just a bit longer, just a bit longer until this magical world...”

From the depths of her heart, she could finally put an end to the detested magical world.

For this purpose, Aliment had gathered individuals who shared the same aspirations, fostering the small Mistral organization into what it had become.

No one within the organization knew about Aliment Alumette's past. She had been an abandoned child.

Her birthplace was the remote estate of a poverty-stricken noble family that held very little renown. Unfortunately, for a long time, they had not been blessed with children, and Aliment was born into such circumstances.

Being of noble blood in the magical nation, she possessed a high magical power value. As a result, the family members held great expectations for her and began to treat her as a savior who would rescue them from the brink of ruin.

However, Aliment was born with a condition known as "Mana Deficiency Disorder."

The formal medical term was "Congenital Mana Deficiency Disorder."

It was an illness of unknown origin, referring to a state where the magical essence within the body did not function from birth. Although the magical essence existed within, it remained dormant, showing no reaction whatsoever, much like being in a deep slumber.

Even if she attempted to chant incantations, her voice would not reach, and the magic would not activate. She was one of the very few individuals in the world, an incredibly rare case.

Aliment, while being a resident of the magical world, was an isolated existence that could not use magic at all.

When Aliment turned three and became capable of chanting incantations, the family members first learned about her condition. Despite having a child born with a high magical power value, she was unable to use magic.

Faced with this truth, the family members fell into despair and made every effort to find a cure. However, despite their exhaustive attempts, a solution remained elusive. Eventually, when Aliment turned ten, her parents vented their anger upon her.

“We’ve done everything we could, yet you can’t even cast a single spell!”

“We can’t afford to take care of you any longer.”

Already a delicate child prone to illness, Aliment was a burden to the family. Ultimately, due to incurring her parents’

wrath, she was finally expelled from the house.

She was abandoned in the depths of a forest infested with magical beasts, erased from existence. Realizing her own worthlessness, even as a young child, Aliment accepted her cruel fate and resigned herself to await death.

And then, a single person extended a helping hand.

“Oh my, what are you doing there?” (T/N: Like Sachi but without any luck) A lady who lived in the secluded forest, Viand Alumette. She was a magical tool artisan who crafted magical instruments in the forest and sold them in town.

By chance, Aliment, who had been abandoned near Viand’s workshop, ended up being found by her and taken under her protection. Upon learning of Aliment’s circumstances, Viand allowed her to stay for a while.

This encounter proved to be a pivotal moment that would dramatically alter Aliment's life.

Viand was a sincere and kind woman. Overflowing with empathy and maternal instincts, she deeply sympathized with Aliment's situation.

Aliment quickly grew fond of Viand, drawn to her compassionate and motherly nature. She admired Viand's gentle way of speaking and refined mannerisms, quickly beginning to emulate them.

The days spent with Viand gradually helped Aliment forget the suffocating experiences of her past household.

And it was in Viand's workshop that Aliment first came into contact with magical tools.

Even though she couldn't use magic herself, she could create marvelous miracles akin to a sorcerer using these tools.

Viand's crafted magical instruments captivated Aliment deeply.

Filled with longing for magic and a desire to become a denizen of the magical world, these magical tools represented a beacon of hope for Aliment.

"Viand-san, please teach me how to create magical tools."

And so, Aliment embarked on a journey to learn the art of crafting magical tools from Viand.

From gathering materials to the step-by-step crafting process, Aliment received patient and thorough instruction on creating magical tools. She quickly honed her skills in crafting magical instruments, driven by her overwhelming enthusiasm.

She was utterly consumed by her newfound passion.

Creating magical tools became an incredibly enjoyable endeavor for her.

Aliment tirelessly accumulated knowledge and experience, all in the hopes of receiving more praise from Viand.

Five years passed, and a turning point arrived for the fifteen-year-old Aliment.

Her benefactor, Viand, fell seriously ill.

Viand had always been frail and prone to sickness, just like Aliment. Although Aliment's health had improved over time while living with Viand, Viand herself was even more delicate.

Following an examination at the town's medical clinic, the prognosis for Viand's future was grim.

"Please don't worry about it. I've always expected things to turn out this way."

Viand showed no signs of panic and accepted her fate with grace.

Regarding Aliment, Viand believed that she had imparted the fundamental knowledge of crafting magical tools, which would enable Aliment to lead a fulfilling life even after she was gone.

However, Aliment couldn't bring herself to face this reality.

She didn't want to be separated from Viand.

She wanted to continue living together in this forest home.

Eventually, when Aliment realized that she couldn't cling to this wish any longer...

“If that’s the case, then at the very least, I’ll fulfill Viand-san’s dream in her place.”

Viand had once shared a dream with Aliment.

“I want to create a world where magicians don’t have to fight.”

The current state of the nation had become overly dependent on magicians. They were used not only to defeat magical beasts but also as weapons in wars. Countless magicians lost their lives each year in conflicts, and Viand had lost her magician parents and acquaintances in the war as well.

For this reason, Viand harbored a grand dream of creating a world where magicians wouldn’t need to suffer in battles.

“If we develop such magical tools, we can create a world where magicians don’t have to fight, right?”

If magicians were being used as weapons, why not replace them with magical tools? For example, special weapons that non-magicians could use to defeat magical beasts. Or fully autonomous magical tools capable of dispatching magical beasts automatically.

Creating such tools could eliminate the necessity for only magicians to fight, thus rectifying the current situation of over-reliance on them. Reports even existed of other countries reducing magician casualties through the introduction of experimental magical tool weapons.

However, concerns about the potential deterioration of public safety due to the introduction of magical tool weapons had led to the postponement of full-scale implementation in some places.

If they could develop magical tool weapons with enhanced safety features, it might lead the magical nation to consider the introduction of magical tool weapons as well.

“Although it pains me to burden Aliment-chan with my dream, it

would be wonderful if we could create something together at the end.”

From that day onward, Aliment and Viand embarked on their final joint creation: a dream tool to bring about a world where magicians didn’t have to fight.

They threw themselves into various experiments with unwavering determination.

Enhancing safety mechanisms, reevaluating specifications to combine safety and practicality, and even devising designs that would be easily accepted by the general populace.

They also addressed the potential danger of riots caused by ordinary citizens possessing magical tool weapons, likely the most pressing issue. They designed safeguards that would automatically activate safety mechanisms, distinguishing between the magical essence of humans and magical beasts.

The design ensured that aiming weapons at people wouldn’t cause problems, and they thoroughly tackled other potential issues.

Even after her mentor Viand passed away due to illness, Aliment continued the pursuit of magical tool crafting, carrying on Viand’s intentions.

Finally, after some time, Aliment managed to complete the magical tool that had been Viand’s dream.

“I’ll go and fulfill your dream, Viand-san.”

Finally, the time had come to officially unveil the magical tool weapon.

Aliment didn’t expect a smooth reception.

There were past instances of similar announcements being made and the implementation being deferred.

She was well aware that the national magicians of the time despised magical tools. They viewed these tools as mere instruments for slightly enhancing daily life.

Tools were not as reliable as humans.

The safety mechanisms might fail, leading to the possibility of people harming each other.

There was also the risk of individuals modifying and misusing the tools.

They listed endless vague concerns and issues, making unilateral accusations. Aliment wasn't even allowed a test run; she was simply shooed away.

Whenever she made subsequent proposals on different occasions, she was coldly rejected without any consideration.

Each time, the argument changed. Vague anxieties and a list of problems were provided.

During this time, Aliment came to realize something.

Ultimately, they were merely afraid of having their "superiority" threatened.

The current reliance on magicians also meant that magicians effectively controlled the nation. In this country, magicians were considered the supreme beings. They maintained their dominance by protecting non-magicians, basking in a sense of superiority.

Hence, they dismissed Viand's dream and her magical tool.

They rejected the idea of non-magicians gaining power through magical tool weapons and standing on equal footing with magicians.

“They’re obsessed with magical supremacy, a bunch of fools...”

Why did Viand want to protect such self-centered individuals?

Weren’t these people responsible for their own suffering?

Following this incident, Aliment’s desire to dismantle the magical world she had once yearned for began to grow.

She despised those who denied Viand’s dream.

She hated the magical nation that they controlled.

Above all, she couldn’t forgive the fact that the magical tool that Viand had poured her heart into creating had been scoffed at and rejected with a single mocking remark.

With the impending collapse of the capital city, Aliment could barely contain her joy.

“How does it feel to be tormented by something you consider mere junk?”

The sight of magicians being tormented by the magical tools they had summarily dismissed was incredibly satisfying for Aliment.

Could magicians wielding only the power they had muster up such a feat?

Indeed, magical tools were the true pillars supporting the world. They couldn’t allow themselves to be ruled by foolish magicians.

“Hmm?”

At that moment, Aliment’s gaze fell upon the battle at the north gate of the capital.

There, magicians seemed to be in control, with magical beasts falling left and right.

As she focused her eyes and observed, one magician in particular stood out, leading the group and fighting valiantly.

“It wasn’t in the information...”

A girl with blonde hair wearing a yellow nightcap. A mysterious owl perched on her head.

Recognizable by her uniform as a student from the magical academy.

It was surprising enough that she had taken down a dragon-type magical beast with an intense lightning bolt earlier, but it seemed she was behind that as well.

Information about the most promising students at the academy had been relayed to Aliment through her contacts, but the existence of such a powerful individual hadn’t been reported.

(If I recall correctly, she had a touch of blue on her uniform, indicating she’s a first-year. If that’s the case, it’s not surprising that her information was overlooked.)

First-year students had limited information available compared to second and third-year students. Unless a student stood out remarkably, missing information was inevitable.

Aliment noticed that she had used teleportation magic to join battles at different gates and had been successfully repelling the onslaught of

magical beasts.

Though her magical essence couldn't be infinite, the attack party's national magicians might have returned by now.

However, even with their presence, Aliment couldn't see them entirely stopping this large-scale invasion.

Nevertheless, the damage could be contained, and the outcome might be disappointing.

Aliment couldn't accept that.

The magicians should experience suffering in abundance, recognizing their own foolishness.

“Well then, shall we deliver the final blow here?”

With an eerie bottle containing smoke in her hand, Aliment removed the lid, wearing a malicious smile.

Chapter 102

Rain of Despair

/ Level 999 / By IX

The battle in front of the gates of the capital city, Blossom, had grown incredibly fierce.

Gigantic magical beasts that increased in number with time.

Magicians becoming exhausted due to the consumption of magical energy and physical strength.

The situation was clearly dire, but it was sustained on the frontlines by the efforts of a single girl and a single owl.

“Poire-chan, let’s head towards the southern gate next!”

“Okay.”

Poire Muir and Mulburry Marmelard.

Without these two, the current stalemate wouldn’t have been possible.

Within just fifteen minutes of the battle’s commencement, they had already achieved significant accomplishments.

The establishment of teleportation gates that allowed them to move freely to each of the gates in the east, west, south, and north.

Deployment of areas with body-enhancing magic and continuous healing magic on various battlefields.

Counteracting the incoming magical beasts attempting to invade from

the skies with flying magic.

Generating earth-based golem puppets to assist in the combat of each member.

Furthermore, skillfully utilizing appropriate magic in various places to take control of the battlefield, turning the tide in favor of the previously disadvantaged faction of magicians.

“Even though she’s still in her school uniform, she’s quite something...”

“The situation she created for us, we can’t let it go to waste!”

Due to Poire’s contributions, the national magicians were also motivated, and the faction continued to push back the magical beasts even more.

Flying through the air, Poire eliminated another magical beast in the sky, then looked out over the battlefield once again.

At the gates of Blossom’s capital city, a solid battlefield that she had built was visible in all directions.

Magicians were fighting valiantly there, and she once again expressed her gratitude to Mulburry, who had triggered this advantage.

“Mr. Owl, you’re a bird, yet you know so many different types of magic.”

“Um, actually, I’m not just an owl, I’m originally a human...”

Ignoring Mulburry’s claim as if it hadn’t been said, Poire continued.

“If you come to the Academy of Magic and train properly, I think you

could become a great magician.”

“I keep telling you! I’m originally a human magician, and I’ve already graduated from the Magic Academy!”

Mulburry, who was still considered to be just a smart owl, protested by flapping her wings.

However, receiving praise was indeed gratifying, so she accepted it sincerely.

On the other hand, Mulburry also felt astonishment toward Poire.

(Poire-chan is the truly amazing one.)

It was already known that her magical power was extraordinary.

Anyone would realize that when they witnessed such powerful lightning magic up close.

But not only her magical power, Poire also had an exceptional amount of magical essence.

Even when she continuously cast incredibly energy-consuming magic, there was still no sign of her energy depleting.

If she could compensate for her lack of knowledge, she could easily rise to a high rank among the magicians.

(These young ones nowadays...)

Thinking of her own disciple, Mulburry couldn’t help but feel that way.

At that moment, a horde of undead magical beasts emerged from the west.

“Alright, next, let’s head to the west gate! I know a magic that can defeat the undead creatures with a single blow.”

“Okay.”

Using the effects of flying magic, Poire flew to the nearby southern gate, then swiftly moved to the west gate using the teleportation gate she had set up.

She intended to use flying magic to reach the front lines and defeat the newly appearing undead magical beasts.

However...

“Hmm?”

Drops of water splashed on Poire’s shoulder.

“Rain...?”

“Yeah, looks like it.”

Looking up, the sky had somehow turned overcast without her noticing.

From there, tiny raindrops were falling, gradually increasing in intensity, wetting the magicians.

The rain also fell on the magical beasts, and they shook the water off irritably.

Rain was a bit troublesome for them as well.

Due to reduced visibility, cooperation became more difficult.

It was more disadvantageous for their side since it became harder to grasp the condition of comrades fighting in the distance.

If they could control the weather, they would have cleared it up immediately. However, it wasn't something they could ignore, and it was manageable within limits.

Thinking this, Mulburry was about to instruct Poire to continue advancing, but...

“Wait a moment, Poire-chan!”

“Huh?”

An “unusual sight” entered her view, causing Mulburry to instinctively call out to Poire.

“What’s... going on?”

“Well, something seems off with the magical beasts’ behavior.”

Upon receiving that response, Poire also noticed the change in the behavior of the magical beasts with a slight delay.

Indeed, the magical beasts visible in front of them seemed somewhat strange.

As if they were suffering and writhing in pain, they staggered and groaned while clutching their bodies.

It seemed that similar events were occurring at the gates in the east, west, south, and north.

(Weakened? No, it seems different somehow...)

Mulburry sensed an unsettling aura from the magical beasts and felt a cold sweat forming.

Meanwhile, other magicians were convinced that this was a perfect opportunity to attack.

Although the cause was unclear, if they could take advantage of the moment when the magical beasts were immobilized, they could gain an even more advantageous position.

Magicians who thought the same thing simultaneously launched an attack on the magical beasts, but...

“Gwaaahhh!!!”

“——What!?”

Suddenly, the magical beasts roared in unison.

Immediately afterward, they began attacking the magicians with tremendous force.

“These... creatures!”

“They’re more ferocious than before!”

Compared to their condition before the strange change, the aggression of the magical beasts had clearly increased.

Magicians who were taken advantage of due to the rapid shifts in the attacks ended up suffering injuries.

(Why did the magical beasts suddenly...? No, for now, I need to focus on dealing with what’s in front of me!) Setting aside the consideration of the cause for now, Mulburry concentrated on handling the immediate threat.

Without delay, she relayed the incantation to Poire.

“【Wandering Spirits——Purifying Light——Sever the Lingering Attachments】——【Sanctuary of the Living Vivan Tail

】.”

In an instant, a circle of light expanded in the area where the undead magical beasts were gathered.

A light-based magic particularly effective against undead creatures.

This was the magic that Mulburry had mentioned earlier, the one that could defeat the undead magical beasts with a single blow.

Conversely, it had little effect on lively creatures and inanimate puppet-like magical beasts. It was completely harmless to humans.

Thus, even involving the national magicians posed no problem. Poire maximized the range of the light circle.

The light of purification poured onto the undead magical beasts.

“Vuooaaahhh!!!”

Emitting eerie moans, the undead magical beasts gradually began dissolving.

For now, the horde of undead creatures that had been advancing from the west was dealt with.

Presumably, similar situations were occurring elsewhere with the magical beasts becoming more aggressive. They needed to hurry and provide assistance to the next battlefield.

However, an unexpected situation arose.

“Vuo! Vuooaaahhh!!!”

“——What!?”

The undead magical beasts, even after being subjected to the purifying magic, did not disappear.

On the contrary, it seemed to have only fueled their anger, making them even more ferocious.

(Can't defeat them in a single blow? Why is that?)

Mulburry had used this 【Sanctuary of the Living Vivan Tail】 magic many times before.

In the Forest of sinners, where various species of magical beasts roamed, she found it useful for exterminating the undead creatures.

There was no undead magical beast that this magic couldn't defeat, but it seemed to have no effect whatsoever on the magical beasts here.

Were the magical beasts becoming “stronger” due to their increased aggression?

No, that wasn't it. It was true that they were becoming stronger, but that wasn't the only reason...

(Is Poire-chan's magical essence... “weakening”?!)

Looking around, Mulburry noticed that other magicians were also struggling with their magic.

Their spells weren't activating properly, and the power of their magic

was decreasing...

Come to think of it, even the light from the earlier 【Sanctuary of the Living Vivan Tail】 seemed to be dimmer.

Considering that the undead magical beasts couldn't be defeated in a single blow, Poire's magical essence was probably malfunctioning.

And the same seemed to be happening to the magical essence of the other magicians.

But why did this sudden...

“Hey, could this be...!”

“Yeah, no mistake! It's the “aggressiveness of the magical beasts” and the “contraction of magical essence” mentioned in the information!”

“The Mistral gang set this up here!”

Hearing the magicians' bitter complaints, Mulburry was reminded of a piece of information she had secretly overheard.

“Before long, the capital city will be filled with rampaging, aggressive magical beasts, and weakened magicians will be trampled upon,” the informant had said.

Not only did they initiate the invasion of magical beasts, but it seemed that the group also aimed to provoke the aggression of the magical beasts and weaken the magicians.

Could this be the aggression and weakening they had heard about?

Of course, the magicians had been cautious about it, but due to the lack of any warning signs, they couldn't predict it beforehand.

How exactly did they manage to trigger the aggression of the magical beasts and the weakening of the magicians simultaneously, and all at once?

“Oh, rain...”

“Huh?”

Poire’s voice spilled out as if she had noticed something, and she continued while looking up at the overcast sky.

“Ever since it started raining, everyone became strange.”

“Y-Yes, indeed, it’s been since we were soaked by this rain...”

As Poire pointed out, this abnormal phenomenon had occurred since the rain began falling.

Could it be that the effects of the magical beasts becoming aggressive and the magical essence weakening were contained within this rain?

The possibility was quite high.

Moreover, this rain had started suddenly, just when the magicians had gained the upper hand.

It would be natural to assume that someone who found this situation unfavorable deliberately caused it. Yes, it wouldn’t be surprising if it was Mistral, they were capable of such things.

Eventually, the unnaturally heavy rain stopped.

The magical beasts that had been drenched emitted roars continuously.

On the contrary, the magicians seemed to be in pain.

With just this rain, the balance between superiority and inferiority had been completely overturned.

The strengthened magical beasts were now attacking the weakened magicians.

“Vuooaaahhh!!!”

The undead magical beasts that couldn't be defeated by the purifying magic alone launched a special attack using their endurance.

Undead corpse-type magical beasts bit at the magicians with their strong teeth and jaws.

Giant skeletal magical beasts used their monstrous strength to send magicians flying.

Ghost-type magical beasts emitted a cold aura unique to their kind, causing suffering among the magicians.

“Chik, Sho...!”

“Someone needs to help us from elsewhere...!”

“It's impossible! The situation is the same elsewhere!”

At that moment, a beast-like magical creature, resembling a humanoid, leaped towards Poire and Mulburry as well.

Not only the undead magical beasts but all magical beast species had become aggressive.

Facing the wolf-faced humanoid creature that approached with tremendous force, Poire instinctively pointed her right hand.

“【The enemy is right here——Crimson Blaze——Shoot through the magic and pierce】——【Burning Sphere Flame Sphere】.”

A flame-based magic spell suitable for single-target elimination——【Burning Sphere Flame Sphere】.

While it was one of the basic spells, its effectiveness was influenced by the magician's magical power value.

With Poire's awakened magical power, it should be possible to defeat the creature in one blow unless there was a significant compatibility issue.

However...

“Gguaaaahh!”

“——What!?”

The beast-like magical creature swiped away the fireball unleashed from Poire's right hand, as if brushing away dust.

A reversal of strength caused by the simultaneous activation of aggression and weakening.

Poire's magic was completely ineffective.

The beast-like creature continued its momentum and closed in on the two, raising its large claws.

In an instant——

Poire turned her back and embraced Mulburry, using her body as a shield.

(Huh...?)

The creature's claws descended, leaving marks on Poire's delicate back.

Due to the impact, her petite body was thrown backwards across the wet grassland, covered in mud and blood.

After a moment, Poire gently spread her arms apart and let out a sigh of relief upon confirming Mulburry's safety.

"O-Owl-san... are you okay?"

"Po-Poire-chan, why...?"

Poire appeared to be far from unscathed. While her back wound wasn't deep, she had undoubtedly suffered a significant blow to her stamina with that single attack.

She wasn't accustomed to such injuries, as evidenced by the faint hint of tears in the corners of her eyes.

Hastily, Mulburry tried to chant a healing spell...

Just then, unexpected screams from other magicians reached Mulburry's ears.

Looking ahead, she saw the battlefield covered in the fresh blood of the magicians.

This was the "Great Catastrophe" that the anti-magic organization Mistral had planned for, involving the aggression of magical beasts and the trampling of weakened magicians.

At this rate, not only the magicians here but also the city of the capital and its inhabitants...

(This is absolutely unacceptable...)

The tragedy of the magical beast invasion in the capital city from the past came to mind.

She couldn't help but wish she were present there herself.

If her physical body, the body of Sage Mulburry, had been there, perhaps she could have delayed this magical beast invasion to some extent.

(I absolutely won't let them destroy the town where Sachi-chan is... I won't let them ruin the magic academy that Sachi-chan treasures!)

Imagining her beloved disciple Sachi laughing happily with her friends, Mulburry felt a strong determination.

And at that moment...

【It's okay.】

(Huh...?)

A quiet voice echoed gently in her mind.

Different from any human voice, resembling the tone of a bell, an inexplicable voice that couldn't be described as just sound.

This sound, almost like a mere melody, was converted into meaningful words in Mulburry's mind.

Mulburry was familiar with this strange sensation.

She had heard this mysterious voice many times since she was young.

It was said to be the voice of magical essence, a sensation only special beings like magicians could perceive...

Chapter 103

Voice of Hope

/ [Level 999](#) / By [IX](#)

Mulburry heard the voice of mana for the first time when she was four years old.

Strictly speaking, she had already been hearing the clear voice of mana residing within her body before that.

However, it wasn't until she turned four that she began to understand the meanings of the words.

She wonders what the first voice she heard was, but it seems like it was something trivial.

Mana usually endlessly rambles about meaningless things.

There would be mana murmuring about the good weather today...

Or mana humming a favorite song continuously...

Or mana laughing for no reason at all...

Sometimes, the mana within her would even start arguments among themselves.

Each mana was so unique, and the struggles of a mage constantly hearing those voices day and night were indescribable.

Yet, on rare occasions, they would teach her something very important, even saving her life.

When Mulburry was still in the orphanage, there was one instance when she fell into a dried-up well.

She was playing alone at the edge of the orphanage's garden, feeling distant from the other children due to the age difference.

Having grown enough to peer into the well, she leaned over the stone edge to see something unusual...

Her hand slipped, and she fell into the well.

Fortunately, the well wasn't too deep, and the ground was covered with dry grass and leaves, preventing her from getting hurt.

However, young Mulburry couldn't escape on her own and found herself trapped, with no one noticing her fall, not even the other children or the caregivers.

"Help me..."

Alone in a dark, cold, and quiet place, fear and anxiety gripped the young girl.

Her voice couldn't reach the outside, and she feared she might never get out, when...

A voice resounded in Mulburry's mind.

"Don't cry."

"Huh?"

It was the voice of mana that she had heard countless times.

As if drawn by Mulburry's tears, the mana appeared and granted her a voice of salvation.

A chant for a magic incantation, a voice of rescue.

At that moment, she was taught the incantation for a wind-based jumping spell, allowing her to escape from the dried-up well.

From then on, the mana would often speak to her during times of danger or important situations, just as it had saved her life before.

It's the same feeling.

This sensation is just like back then.

The feeling when mana bestows a voice of salvation.

The feeling of light piercing through a despairing situation.

“Stay calm, don't give up.”

Listening to that voice, Mulburry's feelings of impatience gradually subsided.

Simultaneously, a big question mark formed in her mind.

In this dire situation, it's understandable that mana would offer her a voice of comfort.

After all, it had saved her from various crises countless times.

However, Mulburry is currently not in her original body but inhabiting the soul of an owl named Hoho.

If she's hearing mana's voice in this state, does that mean the voice belongs to the mana residing within Hoho's body?

“Keep going, don’t give up.”

For the first time, Mulburry heard the voice of mana that wasn’t her own.

Even when she was within a different body, she could clearly hear the voice of that individual’s mana.

This realization surprised her anew.

Furthermore, the subsequent voice of mana brought an even more profound shock to Mulburry.

“Use this.”

That was the message conveyed – a chant for a magic incantation.

The first incantation for magic she ever heard.

Additionally, it taught her the spell’s effect, leaving Mulburry breathless in astonishment.

(This, this magic is—!)

In the midst of what felt like a brief moment, the conversation with Hoho’s mana came to an end.

The sudden announcement of a magic incantation echoed in her mind.

As Mulburry pondered over it, she unexpectedly recalled a certain tale.

Owls were said to have various legends associated with them.

From being depicted as the sacred bird of the goddess of wisdom in myths, known as a symbol of wisdom...

To being seen as embodiments of sages due to their nocturnal habits and scholarly appearance, akin to wearing glasses...

Or even recognized as birds that bring happiness, given their role in pest control in fields since ancient times...

However, in certain countries, they were treated as a completely different symbol.

They were considered a symbol of death.

In folklore and tales, they often embodied demons and were associated with bringing ill fortune and death.

Within that owl, there was mana that taught her a specific magic spell.

And it was...

(This magic could indeed turn the tide of this battle. But the question is, who can actually use this magic?) She had a rough idea.

However, right now, that person wasn't present here.

This precious magic might end up going to waste.

If only that child were here, they might be able to overcome this seemingly hopeless situation.

“Guwaa!”

At that moment, the magical beast that had attacked them earlier lunged at them again.

Realizing that Poire, though wounded and fallen, hadn't died yet, the beastman raised its claws once more.

Poire was immobilized by the pain of her injuries.

Yet, Mulburry, with only the intention of protecting her, crouched down.

Inwardly, Mulburry lamented her own helplessness, screaming within her mind.

And in an instant—

“[Life or Death—Reaper's Scythe—Reap the enemy's head in a single thought]”

As if the plea had just been heard...

Or perhaps, as if the mana had known this would happen and had conveyed the incantation beforehand...

Right before Mulburry's eyes, the familiar silver hair swayed.

“[Demonic Message, Death Notice]!”

A wave of pitch-black energy surged forth, enveloping the approaching beastman.

In an instant, the beastman collapsed like a puppet with its strings cut.

Seeing the lifeless beastman, Mulburry slowly raised her head.

“...You made it in time, thank goodness.”

Silver hair and round emerald eyes.

A well-formed youthful face with a delicate frame.

The blue and white uniform of the magical academy suited them well, and the familiar clover hairpin faintly glimmered.

Her back appeared much larger than when they were together, and Mulburry couldn't hold back her tears of relief.

“It's all right now.”

Sachi Malmurard, the fortunate mage, illuminated the battlefield of despair.

Chapter 104

Me with a Luck Value of 999...

/ Level 999 / By IX

“Sa...chi...?”

After rescuing Poire from the approaching beastmen threat, Sachi lifted Poire, who was holding an owl, into her arms and stepped back.

Once she ensured their temporary safety, Sachi ran her lips while still holding Poire.

“[Face Moistened with Tears—Watchful Angel—Bestow Mercy Upon This Being]—[Capricious Chure of the Angel]”

A white light enveloped Poire’s body, and the wounds on her back were completely healed in an instant.

A high-probability full healing magic that completely cures all wounds of the target—[Capricious Chure of the Angel].

After setting Poire, who had been healed by the spell, back on the ground, Sachi spoke to her in a comforting tone.

“Sorry for being late, Poire-san.”

“No problem. Thanks for healing me.”

Watching this exchange, Mulburry felt astonished that the two were familiar with each other. Being students of the magical academy and apparently in the same year, Mulburry had thought there might be some connection between them...

However, Mulburry had more pressing matters to attend to at the moment than delving into the details of their relationship.

“S-Sachi-chan!”

“Hm?”

Calling her beloved disciple’s name after a long time.

Sachi felt oddly pleased by that, but her response was rather dull.

“Owl? Wait, you’re Mr. HooHoo... right? Wait, why are you talking?”

“Uh, well, indeed this body does belong to Mr. HooHoo, but currently our contents have been swapped...”

Just then, a beast’s roar and the sounds of battle echoed from the front.

Sachi narrowed her azure eyes, directing her gaze towards the frontline of the battlefield.

“But sorry, right now I don’t have time to play with you. If it’s about memories, we can talk about it later...”

“No, Sachi-chan, it’s not like that! It’s me! It’s Mulburry!”

“Huh?”

Sachi’s eyes, which had been narrowed, widened in surprise.

Her gaze slowly shifted towards Mulburry, and the two exchanged a steady gaze.

“Mulburry...san?”

“Yes, that’s right.”

Silence.

Just that one composed response was enough for Sachi to become convinced.

To solidify that conviction, Sachi hugged Mulburry, who was currently in the form of an owl, tightly.

“S-Sachi-chan!?”

“Uh, hehe...! It’s true, you’re Mulburry.”

Tears welled up slightly at the corners of Sachi’s eyes.

Questions about why Mulburry was here and why she was in the body of an owl swirled in her mind. Yet, the feeling of happiness came first.

Mulburry held the same sentiment and bloomed quietly.

“Did you really recognize me just from that moment?”

“Yeah, I was able to inject some Mulburry essence. There’s no mistaking it.”

“Come to think of it, right before your journey, you did the same thing.”

The day when Sachi left for the magical academy.

Right before Sachi left home, she clung to Mulburry’s body one last

time.

It had been quite sudden, and Mulburry had been surprised by the action.

Not to mention, the embarrassment was overwhelming, causing her to blush uncontrollably.

As memories of that time resurfaced in her mind, a slight feeling of embarrassment returned.

While engaged in this exchange, Poire stared blankly at Sachi and asked,

“Were you two acquaintances...?”

“Yeah, it’s a bit of a long story. By the way, why were you together? It’s such a mysterious combination...? And why is Mulburry in Mr. HooHoo’s body anyway?”

“Um, that’s also a long story...”

Amidst the congestion of questions—

“Guaaah!”

“Kakakaa!”

Undead-type magical beasts were running towards them from the front lines.

Sensing their presence, Sachi and Poire readied themselves once more.

“But we don’t have time to chat for long. I’ll fight with you all now. Let’s stop the magical beast invasion together.”

Sachi was determined.

Currently, all the magicians had their mana weakened, and the magical beasts had become more aggressive and powerful. However, Sachi was unaffected by mana depletion due to her probability manipulation ability, providing a strong boost to their fighting capabilities.

However, it was uncertain whether they could halt the magical beast invasion.

Moreover, getting through this without casualties would likely be extremely difficult. The possibility of everyone surviving was probably low.

Sachi understood the dire circumstances, her face tensely showing traces of sweat.

However...

“S-Sachi-chan!”

“Hm?”

“Before that, could you try using this spell?”

Seemingly finding hope, Mulburry called out to Sachi eagerly, holding her back.

Seeing Sachi halt her movements, Mulburry perched on her shoulder and pondered.

Come to think of it, a similar situation had occurred before, when Sachi used her probability magic for the first time.

“S-Sachi-chan, before you go inside the house, could you try chanting

this?”

The ruler of the Forest of Sinners, who had committed countless atrocities, had appeared near Sachi's home. Back then, Mulburry had found hope in Sachi's luck value and taught her the chant for the “Instant Death” spell.

It felt like history repeating itself, Mulburry mused secretly.

Approximately an hour since the magical beast invasion began.

In Aliment Alumettes view, a scene unfolded.

A herd of rampaging magical beasts.

Magicians writhing in pain and agony.

The battlefield of despair was filled with their screams and fresh blood.

“...Are you watching, Viand-san?”

This was the sight Aliment had desired to realize.

A beautiful painting she wanted to dedicate to her mentor, Viand.

The sense of accomplishment and joy for having completed it with her own hands surged within her.

Tears of emotion welled up and overflowed from her eyes.

Then, at that moment...

“Huh?”

In the completed, beautiful painting, she suddenly detected an impurity.

Something as different as the roof of an abandoned church’s bell tower.

A figure was floating, rising to a height where they could oversee the battlefield.

Straining her eyes, she managed to make out the person’s form within the hazy vision.

A silver-haired girl with an owl perched on her shoulder.

(That child...)

A memory at the back of Aliment’s mind was pricked.

Certainly, not long ago, she had left a young magician girl in the underground labyrinth.

Everything from appearance to attire matched.

(Why is she here already...?)

It was far too soon.

Even if she rushed from there to here, it should have taken several hours at least.

Yet, in less than an hour, the girl had arrived here.

Could there have been identical twins?

Or perhaps, like them, she had set up a teleportation point somewhere in the royal capital.

But even if that were the case, Aliment had never heard of a magic that could facilitate long-distance travel from that location to the royal capital.

Unless she possessed an exceptionally high magical power value, which Aliment doubted, there wouldn't be any students at the magical academy who could do it.

(Another touch of blue. Is that person also a first-year student?)

It had been about half a year since the new students had arrived.

Information about promising students had been obtained from the informant Heimbeere, but there was still a lack of investigation regarding the first-year students.

Considering their limited experience, it was concluded that there weren't any individuals who posed a threat. Thus, not much in-depth research had been conducted on the first-year students.

Scholarship students, offspring of prestigious families, and students who served as representatives for their respective classes during the Starflower Festival—all these students had been investigated to some extent...

(I didn't inquire about that student's information. Well, it shouldn't be a special issue.) No matter the means by which that student had arrived here, their presence alone wouldn't cause any significant problems. After all, no one could overturn this chaotic situation on their own.

Apparently, the blonde girl they had confirmed below was currently being granted levitation magic. She was holding her hand up toward

the silver-haired girl.

(Whatever she intends to do is futile. What's visible from there is not hope, but an overwhelming expanse of despair.) Surely, the girl saw it that way too.

An inexhaustible depth of despair.

The sight of magicians wounded and falling.

The scene of screams and fresh blood spreading even further.

It all illustrated how insignificant and foolish magicians were.

“Regret, please. Reflect upon how foolish you are and how you’ve strayed down the wrong path.”

Aliment sneered.

Her laughter escalated from sneering to uproarious.

Taking advantage of being unnoticed, she laughed heartily, vulgarly.

And with the magicians’ screams as her accompaniment, her laughter resounded at the heart of the magical nation.

“Ahahahahaha!!!”

—In an instant.

“[The Time of End has Come—Gaze from the Dark Night—Witness the Fate of That One]”

The voice of the silver-haired girl in the distance...

Certainly, it reached Aliment's ears.

"[The Devil's Eyes—Dead End]!"

In that moment—

From the body of the silver-haired girl, a loathsome wave of pitch-black energy surged.

Behind her, an illusion of a demon, which shouldn't be there, materialized, and the air around grew heavy.

Unintentionally shivering from the chill, Aliment's vision showed her a scene that was beyond belief.

"Guaaah!"

The group of magical beasts assembled to the west of the royal capital.

The magical beasts simultaneously let out roars of pain, and they started collapsing to the ground like cut puppet strings.

One after another, they sank to the ground like that, and even the magicians standing nearby couldn't comprehend what was happening.

And ten seconds later...

If one looked, every magical beast within view was... dead.

"...Huh?"

Dead. There was no doubt about it.

They hadn't just fallen over; it was clear from here that their lives had ended.

The magical beasts had completely lost all vitality.

“What’s... happening...?”

There had been so many magical beasts.

They had become so uncontrollable that nobody could handle them.

Were those magical beasts really killed in just an instant?

And it wasn’t just that group.

The magical beasts visible to the north also collapsed to the ground in the same way.

Yes, just from a casual “glance” of that girl.

“Stop... this, it’s too much...!”

The girl didn’t stop; she continued sweeping her gaze to the east, south, and the rest.

And as the magical beasts entered her field of vision, they started writhing in agony and falling to the ground one after another.

Eventually, all the magical beasts that had been nearing the royal capital breathed their last, and the battlefield that should’ve been filled with despair was engulfed in silence.

No longer were the screams of the magicians present.

No longer were the rampaging magical beasts there.

In an instant, the magical beast invasion had come to an end.

“...”

Aliment's mind was flooded with white.

What on earth had happened in this short time was beyond comprehension.

Or perhaps, deep down, she did understand the situation. However, she was reluctant to admit it, causing her thoughts to involuntarily cease.

(Because...)

Despite all the time spent gathering people and tools...

After overcoming numerous hardships and completing the plan...

Finally achieving what she had yearned for, for so long...

All of that effort had been nullified in an instant.

“How do you feel now, leader of evil?”

“—!?”

When had it happened?

The girl with the silver hair stood behind her, her eyes radiating an ominous aura as she directed her gaze at Aliment.

Chapter 105

The World's Strongest Due to the Absolute Success of Instant Death Magic

After the battlefield fell into silence, I used the “Selfish Summoning Ariane Shifre,” a random teleportation magic, to teleport to a certain location.

To the place where Aliment, the leader of Mistral who had escaped in the underground labyrinth, was located.

I thought that she would probably be watching this battlefield from nearby, but I never expected to find her observing from the roof of this abandoned church bell tower.

She had completely lost the composure she had when I saw her in the underground labyrinth, and she was frozen in a state of shock.

“What... What in the world have you done?”

“Hm?”

“After gathering the magical beasts painstakingly... After all the effort we put into the magical beast invasion, what have you done?”

With disheveled gray hair and an angry gaze, she directed her anger towards me.

It seemed she didn’t know much about me. Well, even if she had gathered information about me beforehand, she wouldn’t have understood the current situation.

I had no obligation to explain, but in order to undermine her fighting spirit, I chose to reveal it.

“Instant Death Magic.”

“Huh...?”

“An ‘ultra-wide-range’ instant death magic that has a one in a million chance of instantly killing any hostile enemy within sight. I used it to instantly kill all the rampaging magical beasts.”

“...?”

Instant death magic targeting individuals—[Demon’s Message Death Notice]. Instant death magic obliterating enemies within a certain range—[Gate to Hell Hell’s Gate]. And on top of that, an ultra-wide-range instant death magic that can sweep away enemies within sight—[Devil’s Eye Dead End]. Mulburry had just learned about this new instant death magic from magical essence, and I had learned it from her a little while ago.

To be honest, I had thought that stopping the magical beast invasion with just [Demon’s Message Death Notice] and

[Gate to Hell Hell’s Gate] would be difficult. Even though I could defeat magical beasts in one strike, there were too many of them not only in the western side but also in other areas.

That’s why it was really fortunate that I could hear the incantation for the new instant death magic from Mulburry.

Thanks to that, I was able to defeat all the magical beasts in an instant.

“W-Why are you able to make that kind of magic succeed? Even with a one in a million chance, you managed to make it work on all the magical beasts in this area...”

Aliment, who didn’t know about me, still had a stern expression and was confused.

Meanwhile, I unknowingly boasted as I recited the lines I had spoken many times before.

“It’s because my Luck Value is 999.”

“Huh?”

“With a Luck Value of 999, my instant death magic is guaranteed to succeed.”

It didn’t matter if it was a single target or multiple targets.

I, with a Luck Value of 999, was able to make instant death magic succeed on any enemies I deemed as such.

With a Luck Value of 999, I could manipulate any probability-based magic to succeed in my favor.

“If I want to kill someone, they will definitely die the moment they come into my sight. That’s the power of me with a Luck Value of 999 and the instant death magic that ended the magical beast invasion—[Devil’s Eye Dead End].”

“Isn’t that... Isn’t that unfair?”

If the roles were reversed, even I would probably have thought the same.

To be able to kill someone with just a glance was undoubtedly unfair.

“If you wanted to, you could kill anyone with just that gaze.”

“...?”

“But I won’t kill you. I won’t let you die and escape. I’ll make sure you fully understand the crimes you’ve committed and make you atone for them.”

That way, I could get her to confess.

Not just about this incident, but also about being the true culprit

behind the catastrophe twelve years ago.

If I did that, I could clear Mulburry's name.

As I prepared once again to apprehend Aliment, at that moment...

"Heh... Crimes? You mentioned crimes?"

"...?"

"Why should my aspiration to change this distorted world be considered a crime?"

As if asserting her actions were justified, she had a serious expression on her face. She didn't have even a trace of doubt that she was wrong. In fact, she seemed to imply that I was the one who was mistaken, and she had even looked at me with concern.

"A foolish magician who unilaterally denies anything that poses a threat in order to maintain their own superiority. It's better to change a magic nation dominated by such individuals, don't you think?"

Presumably, Aliment had her own reasons for her actions. Even from her current words, I could sense that much. I didn't know the exact nature of those reasons, but I felt a strong determination or obsession emanating from her.

"Because you're still young, you just don't know. How insignificant magicians as a presence are, and how they have tainted this nation. Because of that, the dream of my important benefactor..."

"..."

Just because I was still young, huh? It was true that I knew very little about this world, about this magic nation. To others, I probably appeared as an inexperienced girl of fifteen or sixteen, and not very impressive at that.

But...

“...I know.”

“Huh?”

“I know too. I know that the current state of the magic nation... No, certain magicians have the wrong values.”

Aliment widened her eyes in surprise. She probably didn't expect such a response from me.

But I, too, knew a little.

I had been shown the many adult circumstances before coming here, and I had also experienced my own hardships.

“I've suffered a lot too because of my low Mana Value. I was looked down upon by the noble magician family I was born into. In the end, I was cast out from that family, and at the academy, I was treated as a commoner with low Mana Value, and they looked down on me. I've experienced such painful feelings too.”

For some reason, I unintentionally spilled out things that I didn't necessarily need to tell Aliment. Even if I quickly apprehended her and took her into custody, that should have been enough. Or maybe, deep down, I actually wanted to confide in someone.

Maybe I wanted to talk about the “discomfort” I had harbored for a long time regarding the magic nation.

“Yes, I've suffered a lot too. But more than that, what bothers me the most is the fact that my important benefactor is being treated as a criminal.”

“Cr-criminal?”

I revealed to Aliment the unease I had kept in my heart.

“My benefactor, who took me in, was labeled as the cause of the major catastrophe just because she’s a magician.

Because of that, she’s now confined to the Forest of Sinners. From the beginning, I thought something was strange about that. Could they really just imprison a person in a forest for a superstitious belief, especially one related to the nation?”

It’s true that magicians are said to be the source of disaster. And if a major catastrophe were to happen, doubt would naturally be cast upon the magicians in the town.

But could it really be enough to imprison magicians on a national scale based solely on such a superstitious belief?

After all, superstitions are just that—superstitions.

Moreover, even those superstitions seemed quite outdated, and I couldn’t believe that everyone would believe in them wholeheartedly.

“And recently, I finally realized. Maybe this was all just ‘jealousy.’”

“Jealousy...?”

“That person is truly amazing, so I think many magicians must have been jealous when she was known as a ‘Sage’ at one point. Because of that, heartless magicians used the major catastrophe to falsely frame that person as the criminal. And now, at last, I understand that.”

In the battles within the underground labyrinth, I had seen many magicians with biased perspectives.

“Do humans without Mana Value have any value? Such ideas are nothing but empty words!”

“Those without Mana Value are worthless beings! Keeping them alive serves no purpose whatsoever.”

“And yet, you’re telling us to capture Mistral’s people alive? You’re just spouting meaningless nonsense.”

The followers of the Shan faction, who advocated a magic-centric philosophy, had an extreme emphasis on Mana Value.

This was likely due to Crown Prince Shan fearing that Crown Prince Verge would seize the throne. Because Shan lagged behind in the magician hierarchy, and the throne was in jeopardy, he used the argument that Mana Value was the true indicator to protect his claim to the throne.

Conversely, by asserting this, he intended to ensnare Verge, who had low Mana Value. I believed Mulburry had been similarly ensnared by many magicians who were envious of her abilities.

Otherwise, it would be hard to believe that everyone would accept the confinement of magicians without any evidence, based solely on outdated traditions and superstitions.

So, even Aliment’s statement about “foolish magicians who unilaterally deny anything that poses a threat in order to maintain their own superiority” wasn’t completely incomprehensible.

“I also think it’s wrong for magicians with such misguided beliefs to exist. But just because of that, it’s even more wrong to dismiss all magicians and hurt various people in the process!”

“...”

Among them were magicians with good hearts as well. And causing incidents that involve unrelated civilians is nothing short of foolishness.

“Such methods will only breed more hatred in the end. Instead of a cycle of revenge, it might even give rise to new hatred. So, let’s stop this now and surrender, Aliment Alyumet.”

“...”

“And now, Verge, who ranks first in the magician hierarchy, aims to change the magic nation. So, you no longer need to...”

“...”

“There is a need to fight.”

Aliment’s tone changed completely. She murmured weakly, a complete contrast to before. I sensed a sorrowful atmosphere, as if she was thinking of someone who was no longer here.

“I’m sorry. I told a little lie.”

“Huh?”

“I did say that I’m trying to change this distorted world. Because I’ve experienced being looked down upon due to not being able to use magic, and for the sake of those in the same situation, I wanted to change the perspective on magic.

However...”

Her vacant gaze turned toward me, and a smile formed emotionlessly on her pale cheeks.

“Those are just superficial words. My true purpose is to eradicate the detestable existence known as magicians. I cannot forgive those foolish magicians who mocked my important benefactor. To prevent the emergence of anyone like them again, I want to eliminate those who cling to magic. That’s why I gathered those who share the same goal and triggered the beast invasion. As long as there are magicians, there will be a reason for me to fight.”

People who had mocked her important benefactor, magicians. Her goal was to eradicate the existence of magicians to ensure that such individuals wouldn't appear again. Though she held the position of Mistral's leader, it seemed she was driven by a strong sense of mission.

In the end, it all boiled down to a simple grudge. She wanted to destroy magicians because she disliked them. That was her driving force. It actually made the most sense. It wasn't about carrying the feelings of non-magicians, fulfilling a mission, or anything grand like that. At this point, I felt like I finally understood who Aliment Alyumet was.

But that didn't mean I sympathized with her. On the contrary, I felt more compelled than ever to stop her.

"In the end, when both sides impose their views on each other, it comes down to this, doesn't it?"

Aliment retrieved a small knife from her chest and held it with the blade pointed towards me. She wore an emotionless smile and said, "This is the most straightforward proof of righteousness. Battle is the most suitable and understandable means for asserting one's beliefs, even children know that."

It seemed this was the only way left. Half-resigned, I readied myself for the battle.

"Let's prove our righteousness to each other. Nameless young magician."

And so, we began the final battle. Aliment made the first move. She kicked off the roof of the abandoned church and skillfully dashed over the rain-soaked tiles towards me.

Her inhuman physical abilities were apparent. I had also thought this when she evaded Mil's magic. Like Plum, Aliment had likely undergone physical modifications. Given that I had already used body strengthening magic beforehand, I could easily react to Aliment's

movements.

Dodging the knife thrust towards my abdomen at close range, I twisted my upper body to avoid it. It was indeed fast, but not as fast as Plum.

Aliment swiftly passed by as she was running and immediately kicked off the roof again to change direction. As I caught a glimpse of this, I leaped backward to evade her attack and spoke while keeping my distance.

“The die is cast.”

Aliment, with a desperate expression, closed in. The blade, charged with emotion, was thrust forward. As I evaded each strike, I continued to move my lips.

“Guidance of the Gods.”

I recited the incantation precisely, just as it had been taught to me by my benefactor. I held the memories of my first time using magic as a magician close to my heart.

“If you wish to bear a grudge, bear it against your own fate.”

Aliment swung the knife with all her might, her vacant eyes now filled with sharp intent. With her determination, she brought down the blade filled with murderous intent.

“Fall, foolish magician!”

Facing Aliment’s anger head-on...

I opened my right hand and chanted.

“【Fate’s Jest, ForTuna】!”

In an instant, a yellow light emitted from the palm of my hand. Aliment, who was making a wide swing, had no room to evade it and was hit by my magic head-on. Immediately after being struck by the light, she slowly fell to the ground, her entire body paralyzed.

“Fate’s Jest, ForTuna.” A restraining magic that could immobilize the opponent’s movements with a one-in-ten-thousand chance. Thanks to this magic, which I had learned as my first spell as a magician, the leader of the anti-magic organization Mistral was perfectly restrained.

“Aliment Alyumet. You will be apprehended as the mastermind behind this beast invasion. Be prepared to atone for the crimes you’ve committed up until now.”

Aliment gasped and then, like removing a mask, suddenly started crying like a child, completely different from before.

Chapter 106

Welcome Home

/ Level 999 / By IX

After restraining Aliment, I held her captive and arrived at the front of the northern gate where the defense forces were gathered. Many magicians had already gathered there, and I could see the figures of Mulburry-san (Hoohoo) and Poire-san.

“Hey, the silver-haired girl is back!”

“That child is the hero who stopped the magical beast invasion!”

“...Well, it’s really awkward, though.”

I was being oddly scrutinized. Well, it’s natural for all this attention when I had wiped out a massive horde of magical beasts with a powerful instant death spell. It’s kind of uncomfortable being called a hero though.

Feeling uneasy, I managed to make my way to Mulburry-san and the others.

“Welcome back, Sachi-chan.”

“Yeah, th-thank...”

Then, I noticed another familiar figure there.

Dressed in aristocratic-style black coat, a refreshing young man with well-arranged chestnut hair.

“Sorry for being late, Sachi Malmurard-chan.”

“V-Verge-san!?”

It was Verge Gallan, the first-ranked magician and the commander of the attack squad.

About an hour or two ago, he had lost consciousness due to an ambush from Plum at Mistral’s hideout.

“Is your body alright now?”

“Yeah, the wounds were healed with healing magic, so no problem. But I still feel a bit hazy.”

Understandable. After almost singlehandedly quelling the rampage of the Southern Attack Squad and being caught off guard by Plum during his fatigue, it’s surprising that he’s regained consciousness this quickly. Most likely, he heard the situation from other magicians of the attack squad and rushed here.

“Y-You’re quite fast at coming. From Mistral’s hideout to the capital, there’s quite a distance.”

“You’re the one to say that...”

Verge-san displayed a dry smile that seemed mixed with exasperation.

“I can use long-distance teleportation magic with the Multiple Chanting Spell Ensemble. With that, I can easily travel to the capital and back.”

“What about the attack squad then?”

“I’ve left it to the other magicians. They can handle the transportation of Mistral’s soldiers even without me. So, I quickly came back to the

capital alone.”

He said he was worried upon hearing about the magical beast invasion, which is why he hurried here. Then I probably don't need to return to the hideout. If there's a need, I had intended to return there, but it seems that's no longer needed.

The researchers who attacked on the third level were also successfully restrained after I defeated the controlled magical beasts.

“But I never expected you to single-handedly end the magical beast invasion. That really surprised me.”

“No, it's not like I did it alone...”

To begin with, until I arrived, it was the national magicians of the defense force who stopped the magical beast invasion.

Speaking of which, I could spot the third-year students of the magic academy at the southern gate. Because everyone, as members of the defense force, protected the capital, the town was saved from destruction. The ability to eliminate the magical beasts also came from Mulburry-san's power as a mage.

Thinking about all of this and realizing again that this victory was everyone's, Verge-san narrowed his eyes as he looked at the person I was carrying.

“Is she Aliment Alumette, the head of Mistral?”

“Yes. I located her and brought her in.”

Instantly, a surprised and admiring voice filled with astonishment rose from the surroundings.

Currently, Aliment was unable to move due to the restraining magic. Additionally, she seemed to be quietly sleeping, probably exhausted from crying.

“From start to finish, you’ve truly been a lifesaver. Without a doubt, the key players of this operation are you students,”

Verge said.

He must have already heard about Mil’s and Poire’s efforts. Upon reflection, the students’ contributions did indeed seem remarkable. However, without the efforts of the national magicians in each unit, these achievements wouldn’t have been possible.

“In that case, we’ll take custody of Aliment. There’s so much we want to ask her,” Verge continued.

“Yes, please take care of her,” I replied.

Handing Aliment over to Verge, I finally relaxed my shoulders with relief. If Aliment confessed her crimes, the entirety of Mistral’s wrongdoing would be exposed. And finally, Mulburry’s false charges would be cleared.

“....Or not.”

It seemed that things hadn’t been definitively settled yet. Even though the perpetrator behind the major disaster had been caught, the residents of the town still harbored mistrust. Even if Aliment confessed, there would likely be people who continued to believe that mages were the cause of misfortune.

This mistrust stemmed from twelve years ago when inconsiderate mages had unjustly labeled mages as the source of the catastrophe. There were probably still individuals within the organization trying to frame Mulburry, albeit not as many as before. So, it’s better to be cautious...

“Um, everyone!”

“.....?”

“May I make a request?”

Taking advantage of the attention from the national magicians, I raised my voice. As everyone’s gaze turned toward me, Verge tilted his head in curiosity.

“Hmm, why the formality?”

“I was wondering if I could also ask something of Verge-san...”

Holding Mulburry, who had been perched on Poire’s nightcap, I voiced my request.

“Could you provide a testimony?”

“A testimony? About what exactly?”

“That Mage Mulburry... that owl right there fought hard for all of us.”

“S-Sachi-chan...”

Upon hearing my request, a murmur spread among the surrounding magicians. It seemed they hadn’t yet revealed the true identity of the owl.

“Wha- Mage Mulburry?”

“Is this owl really Mage Mulburry?”

“Why would it come out of the forest...”

“Y-Yes, there’s a little bit of a situation...!”

Although I didn't know the details, Verge offered the most reasonable opinion.

"At this point, there's no need to blame anyone for that. We've already heard from many about the owl's contribution.

Without the owl's assistance, the battlefield would have crumbled, and the town would likely have been invaded."

Indeed, escaping the Forest of Sinners by borrowing the body of an owl was something that I believe could be completely offset by this achievement. It could even earn praise in return. Although I am a bit curious why she went through the trouble of escaping using HooHoo-san's body.

"So, of course, we'll have you provide a testimony as well. Because of her, we were able to avoid significant damage. But why bring this up again?"

"Mulburry-san is my mentor. I've been fighting this far to clear Mulburry-san's false charges and free her from the Forest of sinners. I want to convey that Mulburry-san is not a bad person to the townspeople."

Not a malevolent presence that attracts calamity, but rather one of the heroes who protected the town. By having everyone speak of this fact, it would make the liberation from Forest of Sinners more certain.

"Speaking of which, your last name is the same as Mage Mulburry's. I never would have guessed that she was your mentor."

"Mulburry-san is still alone, enduring solitude in that dark, quiet forest. I don't want to make her lonely anymore."

As I tried to continue, Verge interjected, "First things first, if it's Mage Mulburry, my subordinates should already be making arrangements to release her once they obtain evidence that she didn't cause the major disaster."

“Huh, really?”

I had no idea at all. Honestly, I thought the national magicians had completely forgotten about Mulburry-san and such.

“But, indeed, that alone might leave some lingering doubts. Even if we get a confession from Aliment, there will probably still be those who believe in superstitions.”

“Yes. So, I think it might be more certain if we have direct testimonies from Verge-san and other influential figures...”

“Well, there’s a chance that some might even start blaming her who returned from the Forest of Sinners. So, it might be better to strongly assert that mages are not only harmless but beneficial by showing their contributions to defending the capital.”

Additionally, there were still adversaries within the ranks of the national magicians. Perhaps not as many as twelve years ago, but surely there were still those who wanted to frame Mulburry-san. By gaining the trust of the residents here, the liberation from Forest of Sinners could become more assured.

“Alright then, let’s go tell them right away.”

“Huh, right away?”

“Currently, the residents are taking refuge at the Magic Academy. If we can prove your mentor’s innocence now, isn’t this the best opportunity?”

I locked eyes with Mulburry-san as I said that. Currently, the townspeople were evacuating to the Magic Academy.

Certainly, now was the prime opportunity. There, we could convey Mulburry-san’s innocence to many of the residents.

“We’ll help too.”

“Thanks to Mage Mulburry lending her strength, we were able to protect the town.”

“I’ll also tell everyone about Owl-san.”

“Everyone...”

With her face slightly lowered, Mulburry-san, perched on my arm, trembled faintly. Seeing her express her joy, Verge apologized with a hint of regret.

“I’m sorry. I should have released her sooner. But, with just my power, I couldn’t change the residents’ minds. To begin with, if I had more power back then, I might have been able to overturn the decision.”

“Were the magicians at the time supportive of Mulburry-san’s confinement?”

“I wasn’t a national magician for very long back then, so I don’t know the details, but it seems the decision to imprison mages was a consensus among the higher-ranking magicians. It was an unfortunate sacrifice made to quell the anxiety among the residents. Well, I also think it had to do with the jealousy of those who envied her.”

During that time, the residents were quite uneasy, given the great catastrophe. Additionally, the government could utilize her power by surrounding her. “Oh, that’s right. Mulburry-san communicated new spell chants through Hoo-Hoo-san.”

“That was part of the agreement with the government...”

In exchange for allowing correspondence with the outside world, she reported various things to the government. I believe that included the new “spell chants” derived from magical elements. I had felt the impression that she was being used effectively ever since I heard about it.

“But now, I’m sure we can change the residents’ minds. With so many witnesses here and the true culprit behind the major disaster found, people should understand that mages aren’t malevolent.”

“Yes.”

With this, Mulburry-san would finally be free. She wouldn’t be confined anywhere anymore, nor would she be bound by anyone.

I looked around once more and lowered my head to everyone.

“Please lend your voices to help Mulburry-san.”

Responding to my plea, the magicians who fought as part of the defense forces gave encouraging responses. In response, Mulburry-san, held in my arms, once again lowered her head, trying to hide her joy.

And so, with several national magicians, I set off for the Magic Academy. Leaving the rest of the defense forces to handle cleanup and vigilance, we started walking toward the academy. Just as I was about to take my first step—

“—!”

Suddenly, my legs gave out, and I found myself on my knees. An extreme exhaustion I hadn’t noticed hit me. My head felt hazy, sweat was forming on my forehead, and my breathing grew increasingly labored.

“S-Sachi-chan? Are you okay?”

“I might be getting a little tired. But I’m fine...”

I showed Mulburry-san a strained smile and slowly stood up.

I had been fighting nonstop until now. I had experienced intense

tension multiple times, wearing down my spirit. Since I wasn't exactly confident in my physical stamina, it wouldn't be strange for me to collapse at any moment. But I couldn't collapse here. I was so close to realizing the dream I had wanted to achieve... to set Mulburry-san free.

Just a little longer. Hang in there, Sachi.

Chapter 107

I'm Home

[1 Comment](#) / [Level 999](#) / By [IX](#)

When I arrived at the Magic Academy, a powerful magic barrier had been set up there.

It was probably the work of the headmaster's magic.

The barrier was meant to keep only magical beasts out, and when I entered, I found the residents of the capital city there.

“Mom, can't we go home yet?”

“It's already okay. The scary magical beasts have been defeated by the magicians.”

The residents gathered in the large courtyard had relieved expressions.

Apparently, news had been spread that the government had stopped the magical beast invasion, and everyone was trying to leave the academy in peace.

At that moment, Verge called out loudly.

“Could you all wait a moment?”

“Huh, isn't that...”

“I am Verge Gallant, the top-ranked mage.”

“Could it be that Verge-sama stopped the great disaster...?”

Truly a celebrity, Verge commanded the attention of the residents with just a few words, stopping their movements and voices in an instant.

Suddenly, as the courtyard fell into silence, a familiar voice echoed in my mind.

“V-Verge Gallant? Why are you at the academy? Hasn’t the magical beast invasion already been halted?”

“Headmaster Ananas, may I borrow this venue for a moment? I have something to convey to the townspeople.”

The appearance of Verge suddenly in the courtyard surprised the headmaster, who seemed to have communicated with her.

In response to Verge’s request, the headmaster hesitated for a moment but agreed with a somewhat puzzled expression.

As the attention of everyone gathered grew stronger, Verge climbed onto the podium and raised her voice.

“In regards to the recent disaster, there is something I wish to inform the residents.”

Starting off this way, Verge began to explain about thwarting the plan for the magical beast invasion.

He spoke of the plan orchestrated by the anti-magic organization Mistral.

About the state mages who fought to prevent it.

About how they had just stopped the magical beast invasion and protected the town.

And here was Aliment, the culprit, and Verge confirmed that he had indeed captured her.

Finally, Verge turned her gaze towards me and gave me the opportunity to speak.

“Defeating the approaching magical beasts and protecting the town, the greatest contributor is her! Please, won’t you also listen to her story a bit!”

“...”

In response to that voice, I also stood on the podium while holding Mulberry (owl).

Immediately, I could feel the intense gazes of many residents.

It was a different kind of tension than that of battle, stimulating my mind.

Being the center of attention by so many strangers like this was perhaps the first time since the Starflower Festival.

However, that had been merely glimpses of me during the competition; this was the first time I stood before them, commanding attention to speak.

My hands naturally trembled. My voice caught in my throat.

Yet, I mustered the courage to raise my voice.

This was the situation I had longed for the most.

“Nice to meet you all. My name is Sachi. I know this is all quite sudden and bewildering, but there’s something I’d like you to hear.”

“ ... ”

In response, Mulberry curled up in my arms, trembling.

I wondered how people would react from this point on. I shared the same anxiety, but Mulberry, as the person involved, surely carried an even greater burden of apprehension.

And now, it was finally time to express what I had wanted to say all along, with all the strength in my voice.

“As Verge-san mentioned, all the magical beast invasions were caused by the anti-magic organization Mistral! Just like they did during the great disaster twelve years ago, Mistral incited the magical beast invasion! Yet now, despite being blamed as the cause of the great disaster, a magician who was imprisoned in a place called the forest of sinners still exists!”

“ ... ”

I could sense the residents holding their breath, not just the adults but even the children seeming to recognize the term

“magician” and reacting accordingly.

Seeing their not-so-friendly expressions, it was clear that people still held a negative impression of magicians.

Thus, I aimed to change that perception.

“The magician in question is the one who found and rescued me when I was abandoned in the forest. She raised me with care, taught me magic with kindness. I’ve never once been in trouble when I’m with her. The notion that magicians attract disasters is nothing but a baseless assumption!”

“ ... ”

However, the residents still seemed skeptical, casting doubtful looks my way.

After all, what I had shared was subjective.

Changing a deeply ingrained negative impression all at once was unreasonable.

And so, to prove myself, I raised Mulberry in my arms and continued speaking.

“Instead, she fought alongside us to protect the town and everyone. She’s now within this owl’s body, still aiding us even without the ability to use magic. If it weren’t for her, we wouldn’t have been able to stop the magical beast invasion.”

The residents seemed bewildered and murmured among themselves.

It wasn’t easy for them to immediately accept such unexpected information.

Seeing this, Verge interceded on my behalf.

“Everything this child is saying is true. The soul of the magician Mulberry is currently inside this owl. She rescued the defenders who were in a dire situation and protected the town.”

Other national mages joined in, speaking alongside Verge about Mulberry’s contributions.

They spoke of how she supported the defenders with her knowledge despite not being able to use magic.

How she halted the magical beast invasion with numerous unfamiliar spells.

Once everything was said, the courtyard fell into silence once again.

I felt like I still needed to do more, so I lowered my head and made a plea to the residents.

“Please, I ask that you accept Mulberry. Please recognize that she fought for everyone’s sake...”

...Everything that could be conveyed had been conveyed.

Now, it was up to whether they would believe it or not.

Honestly, there was no definitive confession from Aliment yet, and there was a sense of haste in my actions.

However, I believed that this moment and place were the best opportunity to change the town’s perception.

It was a chance to overturn the negative image of magicians.

In the silence-filled space, I kept my head lowered, praying silently.

And then...

Applause erupted in the courtyard.

“...”

Raising my head and looking around, I saw the townspeople sending their applause our way.

More accurately, they were applauding towards Mulberry, the owl I held.

This was...

“Did they... believe us?”

“Pr-Probably...”

As if in response to the question, the applause grew even more enthusiastic.

Furthermore, words of gratitude were being directed at Mulberry.

“Thank you for protecting the town!”

“It’s truly amazing that you stopped the magical beast invasion!”

Mulberry looked around in bewilderment.

There was no longer any sign of the negative impression people had toward magicians.

...It worked.

Through my persuasion and the efforts of the national mages, we managed to change the townspeople’s perception.

Perhaps the most significant factor was having Verge Gallant, the top-ranked mage, on our side.

His endorsement was crucial in making the townspeople believe.

Now, everything was going to be okay.

Realizing this, the tension I’d been holding onto finally dissipated, and exhaustion began to wash over me.

I felt like collapsing right there on the podium, but I somehow

mustered the strength to endure.

After thanking the townspeople, I entrusted the stage to Verge and led Mulberry away.

Sitting on a bench at the edge of the courtyard, I was barely holding on, feeling like I could collapse at any moment.

I was almost falling over, but I managed to resist and stay seated.

Later on, after expressing gratitude to the townspeople and letting Verge take over, I sat down with Mulberry.

I had almost no energy left, and my body felt drained.

I could hardly move my fingers, and as I held Mulberry, my consciousness began to fade.

How much time had passed since then?

For me, it felt like hardly any time at all.

It was as if I had closed my eyes and opened them ten seconds later.

However, the scene that greeted me was...

“Ugh...”

It wasn't the view of the courtyard I had been looking at just moments ago.

A white ceiling and indoor air greeted me instead.

Where was this exactly?

It felt faintly familiar, but I couldn't pinpoint where exactly. Moreover, my consciousness was still hazy.

Somehow, I was no longer sitting on the bench; I found myself lying in a bed.

Where was I? I tried to sit up, but just as I was about to do so...

"She doesn't even clean up the room, and she leaves her clothes strewn everywhere. It's really quite troublesome."

"Ahaha, even in the dorms?"

"Huh...?"

I heard voices engaging in a cheerful conversation.

Both voices were familiar to me.

To confirm, I attempted to sit up, and near my bed, I saw...

"Oh, Sachi!"

"I'm relieved. Are you feeling better?"

"Mill, and Mulberry...?"

A girl with blue hair and an owl were there.

Chapter 108

The First Thing I Want to Do

/ Level 999 / By IX

Mill, sitting on a chair beside the bed.

Near Mill, Mulberry is perched on a makeshift perch.

It seems the voices from earlier were coming from the two of them.

Having confirmed that much, I casually look around.

A large room with four beds on each side wall.

Between the beds, there are curtains for partitions, and shelves with various chemicals are placed at the room's edge.

I also see instruments for measuring height and weight, along with a set of chairs and a table for receptions. While taking in this view, I mutter,

“Where is this...”

“This is the infirmary of the magic academy. Professor Pom, who is in charge, isn't here at the moment.”

Ah, that's right.

This is the infirmary I've visited once before.

I couldn't recall it immediately; perhaps my mind is still a bit foggy.

I came to see Maron's condition after the incident of her injury, even though it was a recent event.

As if she could perceive my thoughts, Mil continues.

"Until yesterday, Maron-san was resting here as well, but since her condition improved, she returned to the dormitory."

"Just yesterday...?"

To that piece of information that couldn't be ignored, I lean forward and inquire.

"H-How long...!"

"Two whole days."

Mulberry answers on behalf of Mill.

Two whole days.

Had that much time really passed since then?

Honestly, it feels like I just closed my eyes a moment ago and opened them now.

But it's true that the scenery has changed from the bench in the schoolyard, and Mil has returned to the academy like this.

I must have been sleeping that much.

"Afterward, Sachi-chan lost consciousness on the bench in the schoolyard. Poire-chan carried her all the way to the infirmary."

“Po... Poire did...?”

For a moment, I doubt how someone as small as her could have such strength...

But I quickly realize she must have used body-enhancing magic.

However, she's not here right now, so I can't thank her immediately.

“The infirmary's Professor Pom said it was just exhaustion. She believed it was due to being tense for a long time, which led to mental fatigue and sleeping.”

“Heh, I knew I was tired, but I never thought I'd sleep for two whole days...”

That probably means I was that tense.

And that's not surprising.

I mean, it was a series of crucial moments.

Fighting soldiers in Mistral's hideout, confronting Aliment, the ruler himself.

Finally, I raised my voice in front of the town's people to clear Mulberry's false charges.

“I returned to the academy just a while ago and heard that Sachi was bedridden. I was surprised and came flying here.

It's just unbelievable that Sachi lost consciousness.”

“What do you think of me? I'm just an ordinary girl, so it's natural for me to collapse or something.”

Mill tends to overestimate me.

While I do realize I'm a bit unique, I'm not some tireless monster.

As we have this conversation, my hazy consciousness begins to awaken.

Then, belatedly, I ask about the aftermath of the incident.

"If Mill's here, you probably know, but what happened to the people of Mistral?"

"They were all taken into custody safely and are currently being held by the national magicians. They're discussing various punishments with the government and the church."

Furthermore, Mill summarizes the events after the incident for me.

After restraining the researchers in the underground labyrinth, they collected evidence of the Grand Catastrophe Plan in the fifth research layer.

The rampaging Shan Gallan and the State Magicians of the Shan Faction are currently under treatment.

It's said that the treatment methods will be discovered by analyzing the confiscated magical tools.

In addition, the treatment of the rampaging individuals, including my brother, will proceed more thoroughly through the analysis of magical tools. So, the various incidents caused by the anti-magic organization Mistral are slowly but surely heading towards resolution.

"Verge also officially declared his intention to become a king and change the magical nation's way of thinking so that rebellious elements like Mistral won't appear again. He announced this to the citizens."

“At any rate, for now, the matter seems to be settled. Of course, there are still invisible issues stacked up, but...”

“Let’s leave those matters to the national magicians. Our roles are done here.”

Hearing those words again from Mill, I finally feel a heavy burden that had been on my shoulders is lifted.

But Mill still murmurs with a complicated expression.

“Well, I can’t really relax until Plum-chan’s punishment is decided.”

“...I hope they can show some leniency.”

Plum’s wounds inflicted on the State Magicians are quite severe.

While there’s a tentative plan for treatment, its success depends on the outcome of analyzing magical tools.

Even before that, considering she harmed many skilled State Magicians, it’s only natural she won’t escape a death sentence.

So, it seems Mill has been using every means possible to intercede with influential figures, seeking leniency for her.

Her mind won’t rest until the final decision is made.

Considering the circumstances and her age, it would be good if her punishment could be less severe, but at this point, all we can do is pray.

Mulberry seems to have already heard most of the situation and watches Mill with a kind gaze.

And there, I finally realize belatedly.

“Come to think of it, I forgot to introduce the two of you properly. Well, it’s probably not necessary at this point...”

Saying that, I introduce both of them, sandwiched between the two.

“This child is my partner and roommate, Mill. And this one is my mentor and precious family, Mulberry, who is currently in the body of an owl.”

“I already know.” “I already know.”

They both say in perfect sync.

Well, it seems they’ve been talking about various things while I was asleep, so introducing them now probably doesn’t matter.

“I didn’t grasp everything about this incident, so I heard a lot from Mill-chan about the assault squad’s situation.”

“We also talked about each other and a lot about Sachi-san.”

“As for me, you probably just discussed my flaws and had a good laugh.”

“If you’re aware of them, then fix them.” “If you’re aware of them, then fix them.”

Again, their voices overlap.

Maybe feeling embarrassed by that, both Mill and Mulberry lower their heads awkwardly.

What is with this synchronization?

“You guys are even more in sync than me. Well, I always felt like you two would get along, so I wanted you to meet someday.”

“Come to think of it, every time you talked about your mentor, you mentioned that.”

Purely because they’re my best friend and mentor, I wanted them to be close.

Plus, I was somewhat looking forward to the chemistry between the two when they met.

“But I never expected my sloppy stories to be the topic that gets them all excited. Why are there so many capable people around me?”

“It’s true, Mill-chan somewhat reminds me of my younger self. Having such a person by Sachi-chan’s side brings a lot of relief as her mentor.”

“Reminds...?”

Certainly, their gestures, tone, and calm atmosphere feel somewhat familiar...

I shift my gaze to Mil, who is sitting on a chair (specifically, between her neck and abdomen), and tilt my head.

“Reminds...?”

“Where are you looking and saying that?” “Where are you looking and saying that?”

Again, their voices overlap.

I’m met with exasperated looks from both of them.

Well, they clearly have differences as vast as heaven and earth.

In fact, physically speaking, Mulberry might resemble me more.

“Anyway, Mulberry-san, are you really... that amazing?”

“You better prepare yourself. You might get too surprised and lose your mind.”

“Don’t exaggerate too much, Sachi-chan!”

Mulberry flaps her wings and shows an irritated expression.

Well, it’s not like I won’t be able to see her in her true form soon, and it’s faster for Mill to see for herself.

And then, I remember after having that conversation.

“Speaking of which, what happened to Mulberry-san’s situation? Did they decide anything about the barrier around the Forest of sinners? Can they release you from it?”

“Head of Mistral, Aliment Alumette, has officially confessed, so it seems the barrier magic will be lifted soon. Well, there was quite a bit of debate within the government, but it seems Verge Gallan-sama used his influence to smooth things over.”

Oh, that’s good to hear.

Still, it seems there are still some people who are wary of magicians after all.

Well, it’s probably the influence of the Shan faction, I think.

Not only Verge, but if even the magician Mulberry returns as a State Magician officially, it could further disrupt the magician hierarchy.

If things go badly, they might be surpassed by the two and end up with no dignity as the third-ranked magicians.

If that happens, it might jeopardize the talk of succession to the throne even more, so it might explain the discontent from the Shan faction.

However, even those minor resistances were apparently crushed by Verge.

As a result, to release Mulberry from the Forest of sinners as soon as possible, they seem to have worked their connections.

“Now Mulberry-san can finally be free. That’s really great.”

That happiness wells up slowly.

As if savoring joy as if it were my own, Mulberry speaks with a feeling of nostalgia.

“All of this is thanks to you, Sachi-chan. You were the one who took me out of that prison I thought I’d never escape from, no one else but you.”

“Well, I didn’t do anything that impressive...”

I wanted to repay Mulberry for her help, so I thought about freeing her from the Forest of Sinners.

I could fulfill that, but somehow, it feels a bit different from what I had imagined.

In the end, with the help of many people, I don’t really feel like I personally helped that much.

But Mulberry doesn't seem to think that way.

"Through your words, Sachi-chan, you realized what you had spoken about. Becoming the world's strongest magician, persuading everyone. You managed to end the unstoppable beast attack, proving your power. Thanks to that, they believed in you."

"..."

The world's strongest magician.

Looking back now, I realize I said something quite grandiose.

The definition is vague, and I don't feel like I've become such an amazing magician.

Still, it's true that everyone recognized my abilities, and that allowed them to believe in my words.

"If I become the world's strongest magician, no one can ignore my voice anymore. Surely, everyone will think that what the strongest magician says is unquestionably right."

I could fulfill the dream I told Mulberry at that time.

Mulberry turns to face me formally.

In that moment, I vaguely see Mulberry's figure reflected behind the owl and felt like she had a beaming smile.

"Thank you so much for helping me, Sachi-chan. You're my one and only pride as a disciple."

"Hehe."

Being told that again, I feel embarrassed.

But I'm glad to see Mulberry so happy.

Then, trying to hide my embarrassment, I suggest something.

“Well, now we just have to wait until the barrier in the Forest of Sinners is lifted. Until then, let's stay in town and go somewhere together.”

“No, I need to return my body to Hoo Hoo soon. I've been borrowing this body for quite a while now.”

“After making sure Sachi-san wakes up safely, I've been saying that I'll return to my original body.”

Oh, right, that's how it was.

From what I've heard, it seems like Hoo Hoo has temporarily given control of the body to Mulberry.

There's no need to overstay our welcome. Hoo Hoo probably has things to do as well.

Then, belatedly, I ask the question that had been on my mind.

“Come to think of it, I've always been curious about this, but why did you come to town by borrowing Hoo Hoo's body?”

“W-Well, that's... um...”

Mulberry's gaze wanders, clearly embarrassed.

Seeing her like that, I suddenly have an epiphany.

“What is it? Could it be that Mulberry-san was feeling lonely?”

“Ugh...”

Her tense expression seems to say I hit the nail on the head.

I secretly think that we’ve had a similar exchange before.

But Mil is also here now, watching with a gentle smile.

Or rather, if there’s a reason Mulberry would go to such lengths to escape, that’s probably the only one I can think of.

Then Mulberry turns her head away with a pout.

“I was just curious about what the unfilial Sachi-chan, who didn’t come home for the summer vacation, was doing at school. I came to see during the Starflower Festival. That’s all.”

“Wha-? You mean Mulberry-san was watching over me the whole time?”

“I couldn’t observe your class, but I made it in time for the festival. I got to see you in action from the middle of the second day onwards.”

“Wow, if you were watching, you could have said something.”

I feel a mixture of embarrassment and happiness, unsure of how to describe this feeling.

Is this what it feels like when parents come to observe classes?

While we’re having this conversation, the door to the infirmary suddenly opens.

I wonder who it is, and when I look over, there...

“Oh, Sachi. Are you awake?”

“Oh, it’s Professor Pom.”

Professor Pom, with her distinct long crimson hair tied back and wearing a white coat, is the infirmary teacher.

I heard she had some business to attend to, but it seems she’s back now.

Then Professor Pom takes a look at my face and lets out a big sigh.

“Geez, the hero who saved the town is napping here, and there are plenty of people coming just for fun to see you. I’ve had a hard time chasing them away.”

“W-Well, sorry about that.”

I feel bad for causing trouble for the teacher without even realizing it.

Well, with someone as imposing as Professor Pom, she could have easily scared them away.

“Anyway, putting that aside, I’ve got some news to deliver.”

“News?”

Everyone looks puzzled, including Mil and Mulberry.

It seems Professor Pom went out to receive this information.

“The barrier that confined the magicians in the forest, it seems it was officially lifted just now. The State Magicians came all the way to the

school to inform us. They asked me to pass the message to you, the magician.”

“...”

The barrier in the forest has been officially lifted.

I unconsciously exchange glances with Mulberry.

This means there’s nothing left to bind Mulberry anymore.

Mulberry can finally leave the Forest of Sinners and step into the outside world.

I look down at my body and convey this to Mulberry.

“I’m sorry, I can’t welcome you properly.”

“It’s fine. Please rest and wait. Until then, please take care of Sachi-chan, Mil-chan.”

“Yes, leave it to me!”

Ideally, I’d want to teleport to Mulberry right away and witness her leaving the Forest of Sinners.

But I can’t do that with my exhausted body.

I’ll take my time and wait for Mulberry.

“Well then, Sachi-chan, I’m heading back. Let’s meet again in this town soon.”

“...Yeah.”

A brief moment of farewell. It feels quite lonely now.

Mulberry seems to feel the same way, looking back at us with a face that seems reluctant to part.

“...Hey, Mulberry-san.”

“...?”

And just before Mulberry’s consciousness fades...

I ask a question that’s been on my mind secretly.

Slowly opening my eyes, I find myself in a familiar house.

The Forest’s House, filled with memories of Sachi.

Mulberry feels relieved that she has returned to her original body.

While her soul was absent, she had entrusted her life to a temporary soul, but it seems there were no issues, and her physical condition is good.

After the commotion just now, a sudden silence envelops everything, making Mulberry feel a sense of loneliness in her heart.

Then, slightly delayed, Mulberry recalls that the barrier in the Forest of Sinners has been lifted.

Almost instinctively, Mulberry readies her arms as if moving her wings, but she’s no longer in the form of an owl, and she feels embarrassed about it.

It's been a while since she last moved her own legs. She dashes out of the house and flies straight towards the exit of the forest.

Defeating the magical beasts she encounters with magic along the way, she races through the familiar forest.

Eventually, she arrives at the exit, nestled between trees that seem to open up like a mouth.

Normally, there would be an invisible barrier set up here by the State Magicians.

Mulberry hesitantly stretches out her hand.

From the dim forest, her fingertips reach towards the outside world, where light shines.

And then, without any obstruction, Mulberry's fingertips touch the fresh air and warm sunlight.

When the barrier was active, it would react at the boundary between the forest and the outside world, gently pushing her body away.

"It's really... the barrier..."

This time, she slowly steps outside, her feet touching the ground of the outside world.

Finally, Mulberry realizes that she's truly free now.

She's no longer bound by the forest.

She's allowed to enter the town with people.

There won't be any more lonely feelings.

And all of this is thanks to that lucky girl, Sachi.

“What’s the first thing you’d like to do after leaving the Forest of Sinners?”

Right before she returned to her original body, Sachi had asked her this.

The answer had been decided long ago, and Mulberry mutters it tearfully.

“I want to meet you and hug you as tightly as I can!”

Magician Mulberry Malmurard, completely forgetting about using teleportation magic...

With her family waiting in the town she loves, she runs with all her might.

Chapter 109

May happiness be with everyone

Mulberry was freed from the Forest of Sinners, and already a week had passed.

During this short period, many things had occurred.

Firstly, the punishment for the captured Mistral soldiers was decided. They were spared from the death penalty and were sentenced to forced labor in a labor camp. Many of them were accustomed to crafting magical tools, so they were mainly assigned tasks related to magical tool production. The irony was not lost that those who had once crafted malevolent magical tools in Mistral were now forced to create beneficial ones.

It seemed Plum was going to receive a similar punishment as the other soldiers, and upon learning this, Mill finally managed to calm her feelings.

As for Aliment, the head of the organization, she was assigned heavy forced labor in a separate facility under strict surveillance. Counseling for mental correction was also conducted concurrently, and depending on the progress, her sentence might be extended. It could be said that she was reaping what she had sown. Let's try to make her feel better by reminding her that she at least didn't undergo forced mental manipulation through magic.

Regarding those who had been driven to a rampage by Mistral's magical tools, due to the successful progress in magical tool analysis, the prospects for treating the rampaging individuals had been established. The magicians affiliated with

the Shan faction, including Shan Gallan from the attack team, were also expected to recover from their rampaging states soon.

Furthermore, special bonuses were given to all the national magicians

who contributed to stopping the magical beast invasion... Verge started making serious moves towards inheriting the throne... These events led to various disputes between the government and the national magicians... The old-school magical practitioners advocating magical supremacy clashed with the Verge faction... A wind of change was blowing through the kingdom, suggesting that the norms and structure of the magical nation were about to undergo transformation.

On the other hand, as for us...

We were diligently studying and training at the magic academy as always.

The third-year students who participated in the defense battle due to the magical beast invasion had fully recovered, and the academy was back to its usual atmosphere.

Since the next final exams weren't too far away, we were focusing on both academy assignments and studies to prepare in advance.

Despite the recent events, there was a feeling of peace as if we were living in a dream.

However, those events were not dreams.

We defeated the anti-magic society Mistral.

We prevented the fall of the capital city due to the magical beast invasion, to the point that we were even temporarily hailed as heroes in the town.

As evidence of this, we still felt gazes directed at us from various corners of the academy.

“There's Sachi, the hero who stopped the magical beast invasion...”

“She used strange magic during the Starlight Festival and was

impressive.”

“If I could beat her in a mock battle, I’d brag about it for a lifetime...”

Such voices could be heard here and there.

While the condescending looks from being commoners had disappeared, now we were attracting more attention in a potentially dangerous way.

So, that’s how things were changing within the academy.

And the most significant change was that I could now meet Mulberry anytime outside the academy.

Currently, Mulberry was living in accommodations within the capital city. It was a lodging facility available at an extremely discounted rate for national magicians. It was a collective housing complex used by many national magicians.

Research on magic could also be conducted there, but for now, Mulberry had only returned as a national magician and was taking her time to decide on her future activities. Honestly, she expressed her confusion, saying that she suddenly became free and didn’t know what to do.

I had been meeting Mulberry almost every day lately.

After classes ended, we would immediately head to our usual meeting spot, the fountain plaza, and have dinner together, becoming a regular routine.

And today, there was something different.

Walking towards the meeting spot, I had three other female students with me.

One of them was Mill. Well, she often followed me, and since we usually had meals with Mulberry, her presence wasn't that unusual.

However, the other two, Maron and Poire, were being invited to this meal for the first time.

That's why we were currently strolling through town together after school, a group of four.

"I'm really happy that Sachi-san invited me for a meal. I never expected this."

"Well, I realized I hadn't properly celebrated your recovery from the hospital, Maron-san."

"If we're talking about celebrating, it's also in honor of Sachi's recovery."

Come to think of it, I did spend about three days in the infirmary.

In that case, this meal could be seen as a celebration for both Maron and me, I suppose.

"Well, this time, one of the reasons is that I wanted to include someone else."

"..."

As we discussed this, we arrived at the fountain plaza, and there stood a familiar woman with black hair.

A black triangular hat and a black robe. She had a silhouette befitting a woman one could even admire.

"Mulberry!"

“Ah, Sachi-chan, welcome. You must be tired.”

Even though it had been a week since Mulberry arrived in town, seeing her face still brought a smile to my lips.

Indeed, Mulberry was truly free now.

She had been recognized as a resident of the town.

I rushed over to Mulberry and gave her a tight hug, pressing my face against her chest.

“You’re still as clingy as ever, Sachi-chan.”

“So, it’s not like I’m being so clingy, Mulberry-san. I’m just receiving my dose of Mulberry essence.”

I was smoothly offering excuses, but well, in reality, I was just being clingy. I mean, what can you do? We can’t meet while I’m at the academy. And being able to be with the real Mulberry like this in town, it’s something I couldn’t have imagined before.

“For a while, I’ll let you receive it without worrying about embarrassment.”

“W-well, that just makes me embarrassed...”

Truly, showcasing this side of me in front of my friends was a bit uncomfortable. As I realized my face was growing warm, I pulled away from Mulberry. At that moment, Maron approached from behind and inquired,

“Um, Sachi-san, who is that lady over there?”

“Ah, sorry, let me introduce her. This person is my mentor, Mulberry. You might recognize her as the magician who’s been talked about in

town lately.”

“Well, a magician, huh?”

It seemed Maron had heard about her before and nodded in understanding.

“I invited you two to dinner today because I wanted to introduce you to Mulberry-san. Maron, I think this is the first time you’ve met her, but you’ve already spoken to Poire, right?”

“It’s been a while, Poire-chan.”

“...”

A renowned duo who had fought side by side just a little over a week ago.

Their exploits were well known among the other national magicians, and their camaraderie was evident.

Wanting to reunite the two of them, I had invited Poire to this occasion.

However, Poire, still looking sleepy, gazed up at Mulberry’s face absentmindedly.

“...Who?”

“Oh, come on. I was in the shape of an owl last time, so maybe you’ve forgotten. It’s me, Mulberry, who fought together during the magical beast invasion.”

“...Who?”

“Why are you asking the same question again!?”

Even though I had given her the name, Poire’s reaction suggested that she hadn’t heard it before.

Perhaps it wasn’t surprising since at that time, she had borrowed the body of the owl Hoo Hoo, making it not so easy to recall. But to think that she couldn’t even remember the name...

“Well, remember? I was teaching various magical incantations even from under your nightcap. I even complimented Poire-chan, saying, ‘You know so many different magics, that’s amazing.’”

“...? At that time, the one I fought alongside was the owl.”

“That’s because that was me!”

Their playful exchange was somewhat heartwarming.

Smiling at that scene, Maron seemed to have grasped the situation.

“I see, so you two had a connection from fighting together. So, Sachi-sama wanted to reunite Poire-san and Mulberry-sama?”

“It’s around the time things have settled down a bit, and Mulberry-san also wanted to greet Poire-san properly again.”

“Um, Sachi-san, I understand that you wanted to reunite the two of them. However, why did you want to introduce Mulberry-san to Maron-san?”

“Huh? Well, that’s, of course...”

Upon Mil’s question, I lightly pinched the sleeves of both Mulberry and Maron.

Positioning them side by side, their “twin peaks” were displayed beautifully, and I nodded emphatically.

“Well, isn’t it a breathtaking view?”

“Did you call Maron here just for this!?”

“N-no, no, it’s obviously a joke!”

Mil’s reaction seemed to take it seriously, so I quickly shook my head.

While it’s true that I wanted to see the sight of them standing side by side, it was just a personal reason.

In truth, Mulberry-san had expressed her desire to talk to Maron as well.

“I’ve seen you perform admirably during the Starlight Festival. Also, you often show concern for my Sachi-chan, so I wanted to express my gratitude.”

“Well, I guess that’s true.”

Also, she wanted to hear from Maron about how I come across as a friend, whether I’m causing any trouble, and such. It seems she wanted to discuss those points. After all, so far, I’ve only heard about such matters from Mil.

Considering I have a limited circle of friends, Maron is a valuable friend to me. She’s practically the only one besides Mil from whom I can hear about those things. I also wanted to thank her for getting along with me.

Anyway, for various reasons, I decided to invite Maron and Poire to this meal.

“Of course, if you don’t want to be seen with me or if it’s just awkward, I’ll leave.”

“Oh no, please let me have the opportunity to talk with Mulberry-sama. There are many things I’m curious about, like stories from the past with Sachi-sama.”

“Why does Mulberry-san seem so humble?”

It’s not like there are many people who automatically consider magicians as villains. She doesn’t need to worry about it so much.

With that said, the rare gathering of the five of us began.

We were at a stylish restaurant with a decent reputation in the capital city. We had made reservations in advance, so we could enter without any delay. Then, enjoying the recommended menu items, we engaged in lively conversation.

Who could have thought that we’d witness the scene where Mulberry-san and my friends from the academy would come together like this? It made me feel deeply emotional again. I truly realized that I had managed to make my dreams come true.

“What are your plans from now on, Sachi-san?”

“...?”

Suddenly, Mil posed a question to me. Currently, at the table, they were discussing future plans.

“Mulberry-sama mentioned that you were aiming to become a national magician to help her. Since you’ve already fulfilled your dream before becoming a national magician, I’m curious about what you plan to do next.”

“Of course, I’ll continue aiming to become a national magician. And

this time, I'll truly become the 'World's Strongest Magician.'"

"The world's strongest?"

As Mil mentioned, I had realized my dream before becoming a national magician.

But there were still things I wanted to do and responsibilities I needed to fulfill.

"Some people still harbor suspicions about Mulberry-san. They wonder if she's really the hero who saved the town. In smaller villages away from the town, there are even fairy tales about magicians being evil. People who haven't heard about her exploits firsthand might not easily believe it."

"Yes, that's true. Those who haven't heard about her accomplishments in town might not readily believe it."

"Yeah. So, to eliminate that doubt, I'll become the top-ranked national magician and make sure everyone knows that my mentor is Mulberry-san. That way, they'll finally understand that Mulberry-san is an amazing magician."

"..."

From being a villainous magician who brought calamity to the town to being a great magician who raised the top-ranking magician... Changing how people perceive her might make them realize that Mulberry-san is a good person after all.

Of course, Mulberry-san herself could also gradually help people and spread positive rumors. But that approach is quite slow, and I can easily imagine it taking a tremendous amount of time.

So, if I become super famous and proudly declare, "My mentor is Mulberry-san!" then surely people will believe in her right away.

“Also, well, I want to become a top-ranked national magician to earn lots of money and repay Mulberry-san for all her help.”

“It’s all for Mulberry-san, huh?”

Mil didn’t seem exasperated by this and smiled warmly.

Mulberry-san herself seemed happy too and continued speaking as if to connect her words with Mil’s.

“And aiming to become the top-ranked magician is incredibly challenging. But somehow, I feel like Sachi-chan can do it.”

“Exactly, exactly! Expect great things from me!”

Come to think of it, I remember having a similar exchange when I declared my goal of becoming the world’s strongest national magician. With these thoughts in mind, we wrapped up our discussion about the future. The dishes on the table were mostly finished as well.

As the atmosphere began to signal that it might be time to leave, I suddenly remembered something and turned to Mulberry-san.

“Oh, by the way, Mulberry-san.”

“...What is it?”

“Can we meet again at the same time tomorrow, or something like that?”

Mulberry-san happily nodded.

“Of course, I have nothing specific to do at the moment. Another meal?”

“N-no, not that. Tomorrow, I want you to come to the academy.”

“Huh? To the magical academy?”

At first, Mulberry-san tilted her head in confusion, but then she quickly agreed with, “Alright.”

I was planning to explain the reason, but since she didn’t ask, I decided to keep it a surprise for tomorrow.

The next day.

After school, I went to the school gate to pick up Mulberry-san.

Together with Mulberry-san, who was reminiscing about the school’s surroundings, we headed towards the fourth floor of the special building on the west side.

Yes, in that place I had become so familiar with...

“Oh, you’ve come, Sachi Malmurard. And Mulberry Malmurard too, I see.”

“Pr-President?”

President Ananas was present in the headmaster’s office.

Today, I had called Mulberry-san here to have a discussion involving the president as well.

Facing the president, who was waiting for us, Mulberry-san appeared bewildered, but without further ado, I began the conversation.

“Mulberry-san, would you consider becoming a teacher at this school?”

“...Huh?”

Her pupils blinked rapidly.

Well, that’s a natural reaction.

She probably never imagined that she would be asked whether she wanted to become a teacher all of a sudden.

“I-I’m not quite sure about the context of this conversation...”

“To prevent the plan of Mistral, Sachi Malmurard was of great assistance multiple times. In gratitude for that, I promised to grant one wish for Sachi Malmurard. And that wish is for you, Mulberry, to become a teacher at this school.”

“So, she asked if Mulberry-san could become a teacher at the school...”

“Why would you make such a request...?”

It’s understandable for Mulberry-san to keep displaying question marks.

But I had a strong desire to have Mulberry-san become a teacher at the school.

“Mulberry-san is my mentor, and I know she’s good at teaching magic. Also, Mulberry-san mentioned that she’s unsure about what to do next. That’s why.”

“Indeed, I have no clear plans for my future activities...”

“Being a teacher at a magic academy comes with excellent conditions, and I believe it might help dispel some of the negative impressions

about magicians. Plus, most importantly... we'll be able to see each other all the time!"

"..."

Yes, this is merely my selfish desire.

Mulberry-san, who had suddenly become free and was now unsure about what to do, isn't this the best way to give her some direction? Moreover, I had already arranged with the president that she would be able to grant one wish, and I thought this was the best way to use it.

"As we had an informant within the school who has left, we have a gap to fill. So, I intended to select new talents from the ranks of national magicians. Besides, since it's also Sachi's request, the arrangements for Mulberry to be employed by the school are already in place. Well, at first, she would begin with practical training as part of her education."

"Me, becoming a teacher at a magic academy..."

While Mulberry-san remained flabbergasted, I felt apologetic as I spoke.

"Of course, this is my selfish wish, so you don't have to force yourself. I know Mulberry-san isn't used to being in the public eye, and if you have other things you'd like to do, you can prioritize those. But I wanted you to consider this as an option..."

"..."

Given that this is a sudden proposition, it's unlikely she can decide right away. So, I suggested that she could take some time to think about it before making a decision...

"...I can also protect Sachi-chan anytime, after all."

“Huh?”

Mulberry-san turned her gaze towards the president and smiled warmly.

“If it’s alright with someone like me, I would be honored to become a teacher at this school.”

“...”

I acted on impulse and hugged Mulberry-san tightly, who was looking surprised.

And so, Mulberry-san was freed from the Guiltia Sin Forest and decided to become a teacher at the magic academy.

From now on, I would live my school life surrounded by my beloved Mulberry and friends.

I never expected that such a happy moment would come.

“If only Mulberry-san could enroll as well...”

That was what Mulberry-san had recommended on the day she suggested me to join the magic academy.

I said it as a joke, but I never imagined that even that could come true like this.

I truly am fortunate.

But is it okay for only me to taste this happiness?

No, that would be such a waste.

Luck should visit everyone equally, and truly, when everyone is happy, I can feel even happier.

So...

May such luck visit everyone as well.

With a luck value of 999, I possess the ultimate magic spell, “Instant Death Magic,” and I am the world’s strongest.

The End.